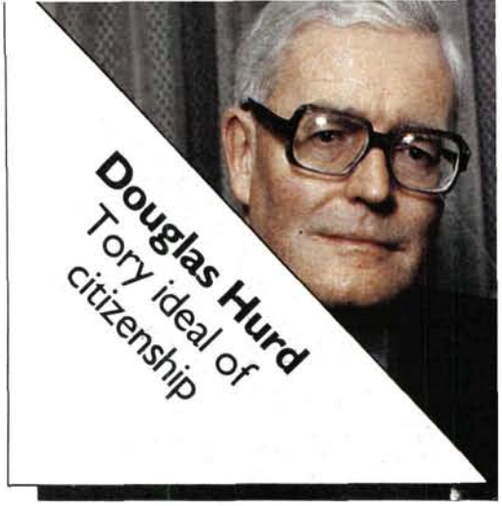
NEW STATESMAN
27 April 1988 IR£1.46 US$1.75 By Air £1



Douglas Hurd
Tory ideal of citizenship

France swings **left**
John Curtice: Labour and the polls

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 115 No 2979 29 April 1988

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NB

Will Gorbachev make it? The consequences of success and failure of reform in Russia. Denmark tests NATO. The graphic language of Neville Brody deciphered

A flawed vision

IF THE THATCHER government were truly guided by some of the beliefs that Douglas Hurd expresses on page 14, we would be tempted to recommend voting Conservative next time. Mr Hurd's is one of the few humane and flexible intelligences remaining on the Tory front bench, and his stress on citizenship, democratisation, the diffusion of power and values of community seems remarkably close to much of what the *New Statesman* advocates.

Somehow, we think we shall resist the temptation. Not only because the government's actions and their effects bear absolutely no likeness to Hurd's benign vision, but because there is a crippling inconsistency, verging on incoherence, in what Hurd claims to believe.

For the present government, of course, only some sorts of collectivities are legitimate. A government truly committed to communitarian values, to the diffusion of power, would doubtless be showing a deep public affection for those great if somewhat decayed monuments to voluntary action and collective self-advancement, the trades unions. It would smile on the efforts of the Inner London Education Authority, or of Scots and Welsh devolutionists, to retain or extend decentralised decision-making. It would (in the words of Clause 28) present a positive light, or even promote, the activities of self-formed communities of sexual orientation. It would help local communities survive or revive by linking taxation to ability to pay, both for the individual and for the locality itself; by subsidising rural transport and inner-city housing services; by stimulating rather than starving cultural and educational institutions. It would enthusiastically sponsor a Freedom of Information Bill, electoral reform, a Bill of Rights enshrining the ideal of citizenship. It is almost unimaginable that Mr Hurd's government should do any of these things. The pity is that Labour, too, promises so few of them.

The strongest human loyalties, says Hurd, are to family, neighbourhood and nation. Yet surely even he must know how sick the rhetoric of familial mutual aid sounds to the six million who live alone, the 14 million in households without a full-time wage earner.

In many matters, large and small, Douglas Hurd seems confused. In one place he welcomes "greater equality of opportunity", in another calls the pursuit of equality "shrivelling". He advocates decentralisation, but cheerfully admits that some Tory policies at least "involve taking power from local councils to the centre in order to prevent its abuse or atrophy". (Does he *intend* to "prevent the atrophy of power" or is this a Freudian slip?) He speaks of "Conservative philosophy" and later blandly denies that this government has a grand design or spends any time at all philosophising. He writes, oxymoronically, of narrow universalities and of voluntary obligations.

Most important, he appears to believe that acquisitive individualism can be combined with the values of community and caring. This is simply illogical. If market liberal beliefs — that society is just a collection of self-regarding individuals — are true, then there is no basis on which common social purpose, mutual help, could be built. There is no reason why citizenly duties or a sense of mutual responsibility should spontaneously arise within such individuals. They would have to be imposed by authoritarian state power — as Friedrick Hayek in his latterday, explicitly anti-democratic, phase has been honest enough to admit.

Douglas Hurd denies that the Tory party is adopting Hobbes as its patron saint (as we argued in the *NS* editorial, 15 April, to which Hurd is replying in this issue). That is good news, but perhaps ministers would benefit from re-reading the old monster all the same.

In the famous thirteenth chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes that there are three causes of "warre" within a society: "First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence (i.e. fear); Thirdly, Glory. The first, maketh men invade for Gain; the second, for Safety; and the third, for Reputation." The doctrine of unfettered market individualism ensures unabated conflict through Competition, as limitless as Hobbes's view of nature said it must be. The resulting erosion of social security — in the most general sense of that phrase — raises the threshold of mutual fear, of sharpening social antagonism, the Diffidence of privatised desires.

An ethic of conspicuous consumption at home, that of revived, atavistic nationalism abroad, provoke the conflict for Glory. Douglas Hurd identifies with Burke's disturbingly military metaphor of loyalties formed first through the little "platoons" of families and finding their highest expression in pride of nationality. His favourite poem, we are told, is Larkin's "Homage to a Government" — a bitter lament for the withdrawal of British troops from east of Suez in 1969. We need not look even that far into the past, nor to governments of which Douglas Hurd was not a member, for instances of invasion for the sake of reputation and glory. □

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DIARY

The author of *La Bete Humaine* must be turning in his grave at his sudden appearance in headlines such as "Zola Banned" or "Zola Crisis — Latest". Of course they refer to Ms Budd, but I wonder if the coincidence of names hasn't subconsciously affected some of the pundits — from Norman Tebbit downwards — who have been yelling 'j'accuse!" Take last weekend's *Sunday Times*, in which Simon Jenkins commended Tebbit's speech. "Miss Budd is an unfortunate case on which to make a stand on principle," Jenkins admitted, having argued that we should go to any length to defend her against "blackmail" by anti-apartheid campaigners. "But principles are rarely comfortable." The Dreyfusard echo is unmistakeable: Budd may be stupid or naive or even a rather nasty piece of work, but she is the victim of unjust persecution and we should say so. For, as Jenkins rather grandiloquently concluded, "*Civis Britannica est*".

Except that she isn't, in anything but name. The careless *Daily Telegraph* let the cat out of the bag last Friday with a front-page headline revealing that a "fed-up" Budd might "go home". Home, as they say, is where the heart is.

○

Incidentally, though everyone knows that Zola Budd established an all-comers' record for the speed with which she got her British citizenship, it isn't always remembered that the whole thing was a circulation-boosting stunt organised and paid for by the *Daily Mail*. But why would a British Prime Minister do such a huge favour for a mere newspaper? Consider the following timetable:

May 1979: Thatcher wins general election after stupendous campaign of anti-Labour lies and propaganda by *Daily Mail*. (At one point the paper even copies out a Conservative press release and prints it on page one as a "news" story.)

June 1982: David English, editor of the *Daily Mail*, receives knighthood on Thatcher's personal recommendation. (It is reported that he would have got it slightly earlier but for embarrassing *Mail* misdemeanours such as "buying up" relations of the Yorkshire Ripper.)

May 1983: Thatcher wins general election again. *Daily Mail* works tirelessly on her behalf.

March 1984: Zola Budd is brought to Britain by *Daily Mail* and becomes British citizen forthwith, thanks to Thatcher and the then Home Secretary, Leon Brittan.

You don't need to be a serious conspiracy theorist to see a pattern here. And there is an inescapable conclusion. Last June, yet again, Thatcher won a general election; yet again, the *Daily Mail* was in tip-top form. The paper's reward is due soon.

○

A begging letter reaches me from one Gerald E Pulver, Florida chairman of the Friends of General Singlaub. General who? Allow Gerald E Pulver to enlighten us. John K Singlaub is "a true American Hero" who has "served his country in every conceivable way". Wherever America needed heroism, Singlaub was the first to volunteer — "in Korea, in Free China, in the Philippines, in Manchuria, in Vietnam, on countless secret assignments concerning which historians can never write". And what have the Americans given back to General K Singlaub in return for his devotion to duty and defence of their way of life? "*Nothing*! Nothing but hardship and outrageous attacks. The Internal Revenue Services has revoked the tax exempt status of his foundation . . ." Please give generously, Pulver implores. What he fails to do is tell us anything about the persecuted "foundation" — even its names.

This is understandable. Pulver presents the General as a simple old soldier who knows nothing of political intrigue. It might spoil the picture were he to add that Singlaub runs the US Council for World Freedom, an offshoot of the deranged and exceedingly right-wing World Anti-Communist League.

○

You might think that after the Zeebrugge disaster P&O would allow a decent interval to elapse before lowering its safety standards further. But that would be to reckon without the insouciant P&O chairman, Sir Jeffrey Stirling, who is in his spare time retained as a "special adviser" to the Thatcher government. I was alarmed, however, to hear the confident announcement from the NUS's deputy general secretary: "This is going to be our Wapping." Is Wapping to be, like King Canute's seaside antics, one of those historical tales which no one can ever remember correctly?

○

I once invited myself to tea with a foul-tempered British High Commissioner in Asia. " I hate journalists," he warned me soon after I arrived at his residence. "All they do is speculate. My view is that if a thing hasn't happened it's not worth thinking about." I disagreed stoutly, of course. But I admit that, when it comes to party leadership contests, the old boy may have a point. How many articles beginning "If Mrs Thatcher fell under a bus tomorrow . . ." can the average human being tolerate?

Nevertheless, here is a scenario (as it's called these days). Labour loses the next general election. Someone gently points out to Neil Kinnock that no Labour leader has fought two successive elections without becoming prime minister. He is replaced by John Smith. The part lurches further to the right. And unilateralism is finally and unequivocally dropped. And its new leader's rhetorical skills, sharpened by many years of advocacy on the Scottish legal circuit, persuade the media that Labour is electable after all. Meanwhile the anti-merger Social Democrats are all but extinguished. What happens? The Owenites — including their eponymous top banana, the Doctor — suddenly decide that Labour is talking their language, and bung in their applications for membership.

What follows is anyone's guess. And I wouldn't bother passing on this idle speculation but for one thing: it is already being discussed by one or two politicians who would be closely involved in any such shenanigans. I don't guarantee it will happen. I don't wish it to happen. But that doesn't mean it won't.

○

When John Birt joined the BBC as Deputy Director-General last year his great fear was that he would be attacked as an unregenerate old hippy. Hard to believe now, maybe, but this is the man who was described in a 1972 profile as follows: "He is big, hairy, hip. He wears button-through T-shirts and purple cord pants and a jacket with a snakeskin collar. Every inch a product of the rock age from his steelrims to his two-tone plimmies . . ." He hoped friends would not remind the press of this. And he particularly asked them to forget that, back in the summer of 1971 . . . but no, mum's the word.

Now all is changed, changed utterly. Birt finds himself excoriated instead (by me, among others) as a government lackey. A change of policy is called for: Birt has suggested to the same friends that he wouldn't mind at all if his loon pants were pulled out of the cupboard and displayed to public view. In particular he would like it to be known that back in that balmy summer of 1971 . . . he stood bail for a defendant in the Oz trial.

No sooner said than done.

Francis Wheen

ROGER WODDIS

French kiss

Commentators have suggested that Jacques Chirac, the French Prime Minister, has no chance of beating Francois Mitterrand in the run-off poll for the Presidency unless he accepts the support of the National Front leader, Jean Marie Le Pen

Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques,
Coq or hen, coq or hen?
Is it just a rumour?
Prêter moi ta plume
Pour Le Pen, pour Le Pen.

Will you welcome, will you welcome
His embrace, his embrace?
Coloured immigration,
African or Asian
Master-race, master-race.

Down with tyrants, down with tyrants!
Up the poll, up the poll!
D'you remember Neville
Supping with the Devil? —
Oui, c'est drôle, oui, c'est drôle!

Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques,
Not a chance, not a chance.
Mitterrand will make it,
If he doesn't fake it —
Vive la France! Vive la France!

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"Slickums: stumbling block to arms deal"

THE US Navy, and not Star Wars, now presents the most serious obstacle to a strategic arms control agreement.

It is unlikely that an agreement will be ready for signing at the end-of-May Moscow summit meeting. In two days of talks last week, US and Russian negotiators, led by Messrs Shultz and Shevardnadze, made no significant progress towards resolving disputes over some 1,200 remaining points of detail. Among the oustanding issues was the limitation of sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs, pronounced "slickums").

Some SLCMs are armed with nuclear warheads (typically eight Hiroshimas in explosive power), others with conventional warheads. Only the US and Russia deploy nuclear-armed SLCMs.

Russia insists on limiting the number of nuclear-armed SLCMs, while the US insists that there be no limit on conventional ones. But the two types are not easily distinguishable, and the US maintains that there is no adequate means of verification of limits. Nuclear SLCMs would have to be tagged in a way that made is possible to count them, but did not enable them to be targeted by the opposing military.

Last month, Viktor Karpov, the Russian Foreign Ministry expert, suggested a regime of routine SLCM inspections at missile factories and at bases where warheads are added. Submarines would be inspected only to challenge suspected non-compliance with limits, and not as a routine.

Mr Karpov was told that the US Navy would never allow Russian inspectors onto its submarines. This response is typical of the Navy's arrogance. It contrasts strongly with the very intrusive arrangements for inspections on land which form part of the recent INF treaty.

In a fresh attempt to solve the problem, Paul Nitze, who advises Schultz on arms control, suggested informally that nuclear-armed SLCMs be eliminated altogether by both sides (a zero is technically much easier to verify than any other limit). This suggestion ran into opposition from the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The US Navy is to blame for the SLCM stalemate. It always resists any interference with its armaments or operations. Navy ships conduct provocative operations close to the Soviet Union. Naval nuclear warheads are the only ones not protected by electronic locks against unauthorised use. The Navy conducts large-scale electronic deception in peacetime and plans to attack Soviet nuclear-missile submarines in the event of conventional war. It is very much a law unto itself.

Star Wars has again been downgraded by the Pentagon, and is likely to disappear altogether when Reagan leaves office next January. The other two outstanding major strategic weapons issues, air-launched cruise missiles and mobile land-based missiles, still require much time-consuming attention to detail. But SLCMs remain the real stumbling block. Mr Reagan is still anxious for a strategic arms treaty. He can get it if he wants. As President of the United States he is also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. He has only to take command of his Navy.

Felix Pirani

Bellos goes: need for tough decisions stays

THE RESIGNATION of Linda Bellos as leader of Lambeth council marks the future marginalisation of the hard left in London Labour politics and the increasing influence of the uncompromising soft left grouping, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

But the LCC, by forcing Bellos out, has taken a calculated risk. Although the odds are in its favour to gain control of the ruling Labour group of councillors, if it rebounds Lambeth will end up in the hands of hardline Trotskyists bent on pushing the council into confrontation with the government and illegal spending.

Bellos went before she was pushed. The extended franchise through which leading councillors are elected gives ward-based local Labour parties the right to send delegates to the election meeting on 9 May. Bellos and her slate had gained the support of only five of the 22 wards. Nor is the LCC certain to gain control at that meeting, especially as its candidate, dedicated anti-Militant campaigner John Mann, is only matched in his personal unpopularity among councillors by the Trotskyist candidate Joan Twelves.

Like other ratecapped councils, Lambeth is facing a financial crisis and Bellos's administration has just pushed through a budget which lops £60 million off the original intended spending plans of £200 million and cuts staff, through voluntary redundancy, from 10,400 to 9,400.

Although the soft left supports the budget and the cuts, it decided to challenge Bellos because it was angered by her continued flirtation with the hard left. Although Bellos pushed through the cuts and has dropped her confrontational rhetoric, she frequently makes speeches supporting the Trotskyists in the council chamber, only to vote against them in the division lobby.

Apart from her frequent habit of announcing her resignation — even this time many Lambeth watchers reckon she is hoping to be called back after a period of chaos — Bellos's enduring characteristic has been to play to the gallery. her speaking style consists of frequent scans of the audience searching for the approbation she so obviously craves. Behind the scenes, council officers and councillors say that Bellos was a capable administrator who was prepared to make hard decisions. However, her unwillingness to demonstrate this realism publicly runs counter to the atmosphere of pragmatism prevailing in the ratecapped London boroughs since the general election. They cannot continue to sit on a fence, making "right on" political noises but "right off" political decisions.

The other reason for the soft left challenge was that it doubted the Bellos administration's ability to make the cuts required to meet the legal budget. Although much of Lambeth's £60 million cuts are only on paper (since the council has consistently underspent because of its inability to recruit staff), very real reductions in basic services such as housing and social services will have to be made. The key question is whether the unions can be won over to support the council's budget or, failing that, whether a new Labour administration will take a firm stance with them. In her resignation statement, Bellos spoke of co-operation with the cuts from the blue collar unions but resistance from the white collar NALGO. Indeed, NALGO has effectively blocked compulsory redeployment, which is an essential prerequisite of cutting down the number of staff.

This raises a question with which all the ratecapped councils are having to grapple. So far, the "jobs" has been dropped from the old slogan of saving "jobs and services" but all the councils have agreed that there will be no compulsory redundancies. Bellos's department may well show that it is impossible for councils to stick to this policy. Making cuts of up to a quarter of the budget in one year without forcing people out may well turn out to be impractical and, as the financial year which started on 1 April unfolds, the dividing line between the pragmatists and the hardliners may well turn out to be the issue of compulsory redundancies.

Christian Wolmar

New Evidence for the Defence

PERDITION, Jim Allen's controversial play alleging co-operation between Zionists and Nazis over the "Final Solution" in wartime Budapest, is to receive six performances at London's Conway Hall in the first two weeks of May. Allegations of anti-semitism kept the play off the London stage throughout last year. Yet evidence from university-based Holocaust Institutes, both in America and Israel, confirms some of the play's bitterly contested themes. Surprisingly, these studies have not yet figured in the debate.

The most important is the two-volume *The Politics of Genocide* by Professor Randolph Braham published in 1980. Inevitably, a central preoccupation of the book is why "the Jews of Hungary, excepting those of Budapest, were destroyed with unprecedented speed in the most ruthless deportation programme of the war". And why "the provincial Jews behaved in a resigned and docile manner throughout the ghettoisation, concentration and deportation process".

After a thorough view of the documented evidence, Professor Braham reaches the following conclusions in his key chapter *The Conspiracy of*

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Silence.

☐ The Hungarian Jews simply did not know what the Nazis intended for them until they had actually arrived at the death camps.
☐ Even when they were told — especially by escapees fleeing from Poland — the vast majority did not, perhaps could not, believe it.
☐ But, above all else, there was a deliberate policy of silence by the Zionist leadership, which controlled the main Rescue Committee in Hungary and which negotiated with the Nazis, to keep Hungary's Jews in their fateful ignorance.

It must be stressed that *The Politics of Genocide* is a very cautious and, in some ways, conservative book. After exposing the conspiracy of silence, Professor Braham is at pains to offer a serious defence of it as well as surveying all the criticisms.

As in the famous libel trial in Israel (on which Allen's play is based) involving Rudolph Kastner, the principal leader of the Rescue Committee, the argument hinges on whether negotiations with the Nazis offered the only hope of salvation: that at least the few "prominent" Jews chosen by Kastner would be saved even if the price was remaining silent about the extermination programme for all the rest. The alternative was saving no Jews at all. Escape and resistance were simply not realistic options.

However Professor Braham himself destroys this argument. Later in his book he shows that there *were* those who escaped. And indeed he adds: "A number of families in fact managed to escape across the border. Their number would undoubtedly have been larger had the leaders of the ghettos along the borders, including those of Kolozsvar, clearly informed the masses about the fate the Nazis were planning for them."

Not only was escape possible but resistance too. At least Braham suggests that the Nazis thought so. He cites this as a possible explanation of the Nazis' own motivation in agreeing to Kastner's rescue train. After all, Eichmann agreed to the train after the allies had *refused* his infamous "Swop Jews for Goods" plan. So why did Eichmann let the train go?

"Was this one of Eichmann's devices to buy off or perhaps compensate Kastner for his 'services'? Was it his expression of gratitude for the smooth way he was able to carry out the anti Jewish drive, avoiding another Warsaw uprising?"

In 1984, Professor Braham and many others arranged two international conferences to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Hungarian holocaust. At one, Dr Raphael Vago, a specialist on East European history at the University of Tel Aviv, presented a paper on the response of the Zionist leadership in Palestine. Vago described "a peculiar passivity running through the leadership, which had an immediate effect on the wider public — a passivity whose character and manifestations have preoccupied some of the research that has been conducted in the past years".

He went on to describe a protest against this passivity: "This internal protest by Al Domi, a small group of influential intellectuals, which accused the Yishuv (Zionist) leadership for concentrating solely on the building of a national home in Palestine and diverting the Yishuv's attention from the tragic events in Europe. The group, which was active between 1943 and 1945 was composed of such prominent intellectuals as Martin Buber, Ben-Zion Dinur and Rabbi Benjamin (Redler-Feldman) . . . They pointed out that rescue work organised and co-ordinated from Palestine required total dedication, which was not necessarily shown by the persons in charge of the rescue efforts in the Yishuv . . . They called for an emergency atmosphere dedicated to trying to avert the fate of European Jewish communities. They thought the Yishuv should live night and day in the shadow of the Holocaust and not treat it as a part-time tragedy while carrying on as usual."

A "conspiracy of silence" by the Zionist leadership in Hungary as a response to the Nazis, and at the same time in Palestine a "peculiar passivity"; these are ugly phrases, understandably causing deep anguish, and they should never be used lightly. Yet they are the terms used by Jewish scholarship at the highest levels in efforts to make sense of the Holocaust.

Should a non Jewish artist, who uses theatre as his vehicle of expression have been denied the right to enter this debate?

John Rose

If the caption fits

No 65

As London's Underground system (and especially everyone's *particular* favourite — the renowned Northern Line) goes from worse to even worse, we give you the chance to tell us what you've been muttering under your breath every morning/evening. Captions, speech or think bubbles by Monday 9 May on a postcard please — £10 book token for the winner.

No 63: Winner

Mrs Thatcher: "The smile and the wave to the cameras, Mr Ozal. It's what we call democracy." *(Brian Ruth, London.)*

No to a books boycott

"WORDS are not enough. Positive action is needed." So NUJ President Lionel Morrison opened a conference planned to co-ordinate a response from British writers and journalists to the sweeping censorship imposed on their South African colleagues.

Speaker after South African speaker gave chilling accounts of the security laws in operation. And of how, when no laws were actually broken (for every paper employs a lawyer full time to keep checking the copy), then banning or suspension orders are enforced anyway. Amrit Manga of *New Nation*, whose editor Zwelakhe Sisulu has been jailed without trial for over a year, spoke of "the silencing of every voice but that of apartheid".

Following repeated raids, *New Nation* was closed down for three months at the end of March, not for law-breaking but simply under the blanket powers afforded by the State of Emergency. *South* and the *Daily News* are facing similar suspension. The power of words lay at the heart of the day's discussion: the Pretoria government's fear of open discussion and the necessary self-censorship of those still seeking a way to speak out.

The desire not to extend the repression with a publishing boycott has gained strength among those still eager to demonstrate their opposition to the regime. African National Congress member Tanya Abraham spoke forcefully of the need to support the democratic educational organisations within the country, and repeated references were made to the formative influences of particular books on a generation of political leaders. And, lest any writer present imagined that either they or the possible withdrawal of their material were crucial, Joe Thloloe of the Media Workers' Association offered a modest reminder of how the written word can be transcended: "People find other ways of communicating. As soon as ANC songs are composed in Lusaka they are sung in Soweto."

Hitherto the response from British publishers has been decidedly ambiguous. Many have stopped listing a price in rands on their dust jackets, only for subsidiary companies to overprint them when they reach South Africa. Penguin probably takes the prize for ruthlessly commercial bet-hedging by bringing out both a *Sanctions Handbook* (for here) and a *Guide to Safe Investment in South America* (for there). Authors were therefore exhorted to examine carefully any contractual clauses relating to South African distribution of their work, to talk to their publishers about their financial interests there, and to consider donating that part of their royalties to one of the democratic educational institutions within the country.

The optimistic gist of the day's proceedings can perhaps be summarised in the words of Sakhela Buhlungu of the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union: "Ideas have no frontiers. They are free and belong to us all." To that end, this initial conference succeeded in being both a forum for listening and for learning — from the most heavily silenced — how to speak out.

Amanda Hopkinson

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Nurses' pay up: Doctors' out of sight

A STUDENT nurse in inner London can now earn £6,783; a staff nurse £10,958; and ward sister £17,238 — thanks to the pay increases, averaging 15.3 per cent, announced last week by John Moore. (These are *top* rates; student nurses outside London are still on only £4,852.)

It's good to see the government bow to political reality and fund the pay review body recommendations in full. But compared with consultants' earnings the figures are still derisory. Consultants, in fact, do very nicely compared even with judges and top civil servants.

A consultant who works full time for the NHS can earn a maximum of £69,220 (compared with, say, a high court judge — now on £68,500). That's composed of a maximum basic salary of £35,500 and a "merit award" (based on seniority and performance) of £33,720.

But the serious money comes from private practice. Consultants who do both NHS and private work are usually on "maximum part-time" contracts, which means that they are paid ten elevenths of their full-time salaries and are obliged to give most of their attention to the NHS. This is no real hardship because it's possible to slope off early to the private hospital, or slot in private operations in the gaps between NHS work. (Those gaps become increasingly frequent as the NHS grinds to a halt.)

When it comes to finding out how much private consultants earn, there are no hard statistics. We're in the realm of indiscreet accountants and gossipy registrars. (Consultants *love* boasting to their registrars how much they earn, while paying them peanuts — say £50 — for doing the actual work). In London it seems possible to earn up to about £400,000 a year. One consultant, who numbers Arab royalty among his clients, is rumoured to earn this much. He certainly supports a life-style consistent with it, favouring monogrammed silk shirts, two London houses and fast cars. An obstetrics consultant at one London hospital is allegedly on £320,000, according to his unguarded accountant.

These figures aren't completely implausible. It would seem perfectly possible to notch up £200,000. I shopped around a few Harley Street consultants this week getting "ballpark" quotes for operating on fictitious ailing relatives. Operations like hip replacements cost around £800 just for the consultants' fees. For my "wife" to have a private baby would be £1,000 to £1,500. Operations like this are routine and shouldn't take the consultant long. Quite often they leave most of it to a minion, or even carry out several operations simultaneously, flitting from theatre to theatre, keeping a watching brief. If you can manage ten operations like that a week you're clocking up half a million a year, and the NHS salary is simply pocket money.

But even lower down the scale there's money to be made for old rope. The charge for administering an electrocardiogram is £50 — and it involves nothing more taxing than pressing a button. *Theoretically you could do 50 an hour.* Nice work if you can get it.

Jolyon Jenkins

POLITICAL SKETCH

Punching in a time warp

Edward Pearce

"THIS" said Tam Dalyell languidly "is a case of organised mendacity". "That is not in order" said the Speaker gently. Accordingly, with a grasp of elegant variation not often seen these days, Mr Dalyell accused the Prime Minister of "gross lack of candour." Much time was lightly expended on Monday, widely seen as a dog day in need of filling up, on the unrewarding topic of parliamentary language.

Upon such affable but blameless trivia conducted with all the verve of slow motion ping pong do we normally debate matters relating to civility and etiquette. The notion of a House in tumult, attractive as a decoy ad ploy to many official Tories, is grossly overdone. Indeed anyone surveying the last throes of legislation in respect of the Local Government Finance Bill, would have found the lethargy of Monday rather provoking.

We had reached the poll capping section, the clause which permits the government to say "Not only have we hit you with a per capita tax designed to incite local electors against high council spending; but, in the event of you not minding the spending and the consequent taxing, we are going to stop it anyway". It is indeed as charming a legislative illustration of belt and braces, (not to mention bridle, snaffle and chastity belt) as we shall see in some little time.

Getting people to vote for it was no trouble. Rebels have to be picky if they are not to use up their disloyalty quotient, but finding supporters actually willing to say it was a good and creditable idea was altogether another matter. They had to fall back on David Wilsher and Edward Leigh. Now to the more overwrought members of the Gay Connection Mr Wilsher is a monster, Mr Clause 28, the compulsive queer-basher, instigator of censorship and general inquisitor's articled clerk.

This is unfair rather in the way charges of racialism over South Africa against the Prime Minister are unfair. *She* has a phobia about radicals which involves her deep apprehension about leftwing movements which happen to be black. Mr Wilsher has a thing against local government and high spending leftwing local government in particular. Just as Mrs Thatcher would be genuinely delighted to see black stockbrokers, black golf club captains and black habitual readers of the *Daily Telegraph* flourishing and indeed living next door, so Mr Wilsher welcomes the sort of Labour council "strong enough" in his phrase to accept perfect subordination to the central power.

Listening to Mr Wilsher and to Mr Leigh, a sunnily disposed and personally agreeable rightwinger of less than Spinozan intellect, one began to realise what the entire operation, not just capping but the poll tax itself, was really about. They went on about Labour in local government almost as if it mattered. Labour backbenchers grew increasingly furious with them under the influence of the same fallacy.

Now it is not disputed within the leadership of the Labour Party (indeed it is disputed there less than anywhere on earth) that there have been Labour local authorities whose attitude to sound finance was over the hills and far away. Neil Kinnock regards Mr Livingstone in the same tolerant manner as a diner into whose consummé something animate has just fallen. Labour recollects what it lost in London during the election. The words of Joe Ashton about the wholesome body of Labour in the North being polluted by excesses of the London Labour Party which was London local government in condensed form, are well understood.

But in every sense that counts this is all *ancien jeu*. Most of the radical councils of Britain have exhausted their vivid enthusiasms and recollect their fervent days much as people write articles about 1968. Here is Mr Blunkett, once a *Daily Mail* regular and a fully accredited bogy, taking part in this debate as an admired exemplar of municipal possibilism. Here are Labour members in the same debate charging Mr Wilsher, and by extension Michael Howard and the Prime Minister, with giving themselves power which could be used to knuckle down a council making provision for nursery education. The beauty of Mr Wilsher, lacking the sophistication and barristerly grasp of which question not to answer, is that, effectively, he concedes as much. Mr Wilsher believes that subordination to the wise hand of central government is good and right. He sounds, as all defenders of the state (very much including Labour) often do — very slightly Czechoslovakian.

Oddly, the libertarian argument, a great Tory strength in the first years of this decade and one which Labour has learned by numbers rather than instinctively, is shifting. It shifts because Mr Wilsher and Mr Leigh and behind them Mr Ridley and the Prime Minister, are caught in a time warp. They are policy-lagged, reacting to the iniquities of the day before last Thursday and punching late. It has been a Conservative point (and a good one) that if a local authority did decide to spend money on flagellomaniacs' rest rooms or whatever, or indeed if, on perfectly uncontroversial good causes they chose to pour cash out by the jugful, no Labour voter ever minded, since there was a world shortage of Labour voters vulnerable to the rates.

It is an overstatement, since the Labour vote is not drawn entirely from the council estates, nor have the Tories themselves done at all badly among non-ratepayers. But broadly, we know what they mean. The Rate Support Grant and the business rate picked up the tab and various regrettable people did run a summer festival of municipal therapy. But is is all yesterday's argument. And those floating it now, when the preoccupation of all sensible men is with the anger of those about to pay much more and not like it, are simply taking their thinking from four-year-old *Daily Mail* editorials.

Mrs Thatcher has created a brand new grievance whose nature will only be measured with the first bills in 1990. She does so in response to a state of affairs which had largely run its course by 1985 and which was white hot political news in 1981. Something wrong with the timing somewhere. □

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Frustrations of life on the back benches

IT ISN'T my view that getting expelled from the House of Commons or throwing the mace around are the best tactics for Labour backbenchers. But the protestations about hooligan behaviour undermining democracy are full of cant. The message which is conveyed by all the hoo-hah is that our parliament is a deeply democratic institution undermined only by trouble-makers. The reality is very different.

The debate on Ron Brown's misbehaviour was a classic. The House was packed at 10pm and in very serious mood. Fine speeches were made about our democratic history and the need for order to achieve rational debate. Then poor little Ron got up and spoke briefly and weakly of his regret and concern for his constituents. Suddenly many realised he might be unwell. Then the debate rolled on as though he had nothing to do with it. But it was agreed that he must be punished because the dignity of Parliament is fundamental to democracy.

That is not the whole story. The rules of the institution are such that it is impossible to hold the executive accountable. But no one is allowed to criticise the institution. If the Opposition did, they would show themselves unable to govern. And if the backbenchers said it they would be thought to be inappropriate as MPs. So we all conspire to pretend that all is well. Generations of schoolchildren visit and are perplexed. But everyone assumes that we know what we are doing.

The agenda is in fact manipulated mercilessly by the government of the day. The name of the game is to dominate proceedings until the press go home. In the mornings select committees and standing committees meet. They are largely ignored because the majorities are in place. Rationality and eloquent argument count for nothing. Everything is voted down by silent and ambitious government backbenchers. In few other jobs is there such a high chance of promotion. Only when there is talk of revolt from government backbenchers are the media interested. This is very frustrating for opposition MPs.

Proceedings in the Chamber start with questions every day. Each department takes its turn. Two hundred MPs enter a raffle two weeks beforehand. The top 12 or 13 get called. Ministers dominate the proceedings. Each MP who is called gets one brief question. The minister can ignore it or dodge it. Nothing can be done. The speaker constantly rules that he has no power to force a minister to answer the question.

The high point of the parliamentary week is Prime Minister's questions. It happens twice a week for 15 minutes. Again the same procedure is followed but only the top four or five get called. Neil Kinnock gets two or three tries; other parties must be fitted in when they rise. Privy Councillors have priority. So the average backbencher probably gets one chance every 12 months.

Next come statements. New government initiatives are announced. They have already been laundered by advertising agencies and press conferences that morning. Lastly come debates of the day. The minister speaks for half an hour. The shadow spokesperson responds. Then the press gallery empties. Other parties get their chance, then important parliamentarians. Backbenchers get ten minutes in an empty chamber with an empty press gallery. They are usually restricted to ten minutes. For this they have to sit in the Chamber for six hours!

Given that we cannot seriously interrogate the government, the only point of doing it all is to use the place as a platform to try to explain our case to the public. But for this we have to rely on the media. They have to cover the front-bench speeches leaving little room for what the backbenchers say — unless of course they say or do something outrageous.

As we see more and more injustice and misery in our constituencies, all this ritual becomes more and more frustrating. Sometimes people get angry and do things they later regret. Sometimes they just shout out in anger. And sometimes they stage protests to get some press attention. For most of the time MPs sit and listen and argue and no one takes a blind bit of notice. But no one is allowed to question it all because then they might be accused of being opposed to "parliamentary democracy".

Clare Short

Clare Short is Labour MP for Ladywell, Birmingham.

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BEN PIMLOTT

Gallup points to whiff of change: crack open the Babycham

WILL MRS THATCHER live and reign forever? Anything seems possible in the surreal atmosphere of contemporary British politics. Still, on balance, it seems unlikely. It is therefore understandable that observers should seize on any sign of slippage, any indication of decay, and wonder whether the turning-point has come.

Following Gallup's announcement of a 1½ per cent Labour lead, with the highest level of Labour support since January 1981 *(before* Labour went crazy at Wembley and the nation went bonkers over the Falklands), pens were poised to write articles of the "How did the government lose its way?" variety. Alas, as Harris's 5 per cent lead the other way quickly showed, one swallow doesn't make a summer. The notion that the government's handling of the social security changes and poll tax would come to be seen as a watershed was swiftly banished.

Yet is is interesting how much even Gallup's inconclusive figure set blood running. Maybe the Labour lead was the result of a statistical error. Nevertheless, all polls had been showing a narrowing of the gap (see John Curtice p13). For a fleeting instant it did seem as if the public was at last reacting against something the government had done, and it became possible to imagine a more sunny landscape with Labour support bobbing along in happy rivalry to the Tories, while the central parties sank into near irrelevance.

That would be a change of a kind though not, of course, enough to guarantee victory. Indeed, it can be argued that mid-term polls have very little significance. During Labour's last long period of Opposition, from 1951 to 1964, the Conservatives lagged in the polls for most of the time. Tories led in Gallup's monthly surveys on only 48 occasions, against Labour's score of 92 (the rest were draws), but that didn't stop them winning two elections comfortably and only marginally losing the third.

So why should Gallup's latest finding cause a stir? One answer is that we live in a more poll-conscious age. Polls are more frequent, more sophisticated, more revered: they offer a kind of shorthand summary of political performance which other indicators don't. In modern elections, the *only* news has become the latest opinion poll, which is why the media commission so many: no less than 54 in last summer's three-week campaign. In between elections we are conditioned to judging parties and politicians in the light of them. One reason why Mrs Thatcher seems so personally unassailable is that Tories under her leadership have dominated the polls. Should that change, perceptions would rapidly alter.

Another answer is that Labour's opinion poll ascendancy for much of the "thirteen wasted years" of post-war Toryism did, in fact, have much more impact than is immediately apparent. Much nonsense is talked today about a past golden age of "consensus". The reality is that there was a consensus about what the public would take, powerfully backed up by evidence that governments were under almost perpetual electoral threat. Tory economic and social policies did not veer wildly from the Keynes-and-Beveride package established by the wartime and Attlee administrations, because it was believed that to embrace extremism would be to court defeat. That was the main rationale behind R.A. Butler's post-1945 policy review, which transformed the Conservative platform on such issues as public ownership, the health service and the welfare state.

Our present time stands in contrast. Labour's most serious failure may, indeed, not be its inability to win elections. (The British system, which allows premiers both to manipulate the economy and to choose the polling date, makes it unusually hard for a government *in situ* to be displaced except through its own carelessness.) The Opposition's most culpable failure has been in ceasing — for a long period — to look like a plausible alternative, even to those who might be disposed to vote against the government.

> *Possibly most important of all Labour now stands a good chance of replacing the political centre as the dumping group for disillusioned ex-Tory votes*

YET IT IS possible for a change in national mood to anticipate the opinion polls. Is the beginning of such a change detectable at present, in spite of the Harris finding? Such a claim would not have much to support it. False hopes have been raised before. It will be recalled that the last parliament, which ended so disastrously for Labour, included an eighteen-month period of Labour pre-eminence in the middle of it. Moreover, the Opposition's capacity to make itself even more unattractive than the government should never be underestimated.

All the same, Tory managers have less reason to feel complacent now than at any time since the election. As Robert Worcester of MORI has pointed out, in policy terms Tories are skating on thin ice. Whereas before, Mrs Thatcher had an enviable ability to increase the popularity of policies she espoused, that has ceased to be the case: support for the Conservative Party is no longer underwritten by support for government behaviour. It used to be Labour that held office in spite of, not because of, its policies. Now the Tories may find themselves similarly vulnerable.

It is the small print of the Gallup survey that makes the most interesting reading, with the turnabout in the attitudes to the community charge especially striking. In February 1986 the poll tax, according to Gallup, was a net asset for the government. The latest poll shows only 26 per cent regarding the tax as a good idea, and a mere 13 per cent favouring it as a replacement to rates, compared with 42 per cent in favour of a local income tax. More remarkable still is the change in perception of the government's record, and of party leaders. As recently as February, those approving the government's record exactly equalled in percentage points those disapproving of it. In the recent survey — which shows Labour only marginally ahead overall — the disapprovers beat the approvers 55-35. As for the leaders, those who are dissatisfied with Mrs Thatcher now exceed those who are satisfied by 16 points, while the gap between disapprovers and approvers of Neil Kinnock is down to 11 per cent. In other words (though the questions to interviewees were not the same) it looks as though Mr Kinnock is now more popular than Mrs Thatcher. Add to these findings the evidence of a substantial Labour lead among those intending to vote in the May local elections and you have some of the ingredients of climactic movement.

BUT THERE is also another factor, which did not apply at an equivalent stage in the last parliament, when Labour also did well in the council elections: the political centre looks out for the count. Those who continue to regard Labour's future with sanctimonious pessimism should here be reminded how dramatically things have altered since 1983. Then there was a common prediction that the road for Labour was inevitably downward. A poll finding that puts Labour back where it was seven years ago should help to nail this myth. Possibly most important of all Labour now stands a good chance of replacing the political centre as the dumping ground for disillusioned ex-Tory votes.

That at least is worth a bottle of Babycham. Real celebration will have to await the moment when Tory support is itself dented. To take away Tory votes may require a wider cultural shift, of the kind that occurred in 1961-4. Then the feeling of boredom and irritation with the hypocrisies of a fumbling administration was almost tangible, reflected in the most *avant garde* sections of the media. *Private Eye* and the television programme *That Was The Week That Was* were symptoms of a healthily restless — if all too brief — episode in the nation's history when right-wing attitudes were widely regarded as *funny*.

Can it happen again? Is it not possible that even Tories are finding something increasingly risible about the Prime Minister, as she drives backbenchers through the lobby in support of measure after measure in which they have no faith? Mrs Thatcher is supreme, her position secure, her throne beyond challenge. All the more interesting, therefore, that (as in the days of Macmillan) it is becoming hard to find a minister who does not combine public declarations of admiration and fealty with private expressions of contempt.

Until recently the Prime Minister carried all before her precisely because, like Cromwell, she disdained the cries of the populace and listened to the word of God. On issue after issue, she instinctively tapped the well of public prejudice. That is an approach that may not be sustained indefinitely. If it is, years two to three of the parliament, when governments almost always do badly, could be livelier than year one. □

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How the drugs war is fought on the cheap

Pepe, an innocent Colombian, risked his life to help the British police smash a Bolivian cocaine ring. But, as* ED HARRIMAN *reports, he now feels exposed

COLIN SAMPSON, West Yorkshire's Chief Constable, wasn't just busy investigating John Stalker last year. His Regional Crime Squad ran a series of spectacular international undercover drugs operations for which Scotland Yard would be justly proud, let alone a small team working out of Wakefield. The Crime Squad's biggest coup was to set up and trap a major Bolivian cocaine dealer in Amsterdam, whose syndicate had previously eluded Dutch, British, and other continental police.

For this the Wakefield team, led by Detective Chief Superintendent Ronald Sagar, took full credit in the press — lead stories in *The Times*, *Today*, *Daily Mail* and *Yorkshire Post*. *The Times* report gives some flavour of their achievement.

"British detectives working undercover in Amsterdam have broken a South American drug ring and seized a haul of almost pure cocaine with a street value of £12 million . . . Last night Sagar said that the arrest and recovery of the cocaine was regarded with 'considerable significance'. It was thought to be the largest success by a British police undercover operation abroad." That was in August. Then, in November, Sagar's team repeated their feat, this time in Madrid, bagging five members of another Colombian syndicate which had sold about 100 kilos of cocaine in a few weeks, much to the chagrin of the Spanish police. This time the Madrid police took splash coverage in the Spanish press and TV.

Sagar's team got quiet thanks from the British Embassy. They were told that their little operation had immeasurably improved relations with Spanish authorities, an experience to be drawn upon in operations against British gangsters living on Spain's "Costa del Crime" and, not least, the IRA. Not bad for a regional force. In fact, there was more. Cocaine smuggling suspects known to Sagar's team were arrested in Paris. Details of South American syndicates operating through restaurants and discos in Amsterdam were fed to the Dutch police. And, perhaps most important of all, Sagar's men built up a detailed, up to date working knowledge of how Colombian and Bolivian syndicates, having glutted the American market, are now dumping cocaine in Britain.

But how did Sampson's men do it? How did a dozen cops in a small Yorkshire town come to be among the most successful cocaine smuggling crime busters in Western Europe?

The answer is an informer, a man without whom they stood little chance of achieving any of their recent successes. He is from Colombia. Today he is very concerned for his life. "If I go back to Colombia I'm a marked man," he says.

He is also angry. "The police told me not to worry. I helped them. I said I wanted a new identity and a new job, like driving a taxi. They kept saying it would be sorted out later. Now they say to me, 'What are you going to do when the immigration officials come to deport you when your visa runs out?' I am ashamed, really ashamed the British police behave this way."

The story he tells provides rare insight into police undercover operations. The *New Statesman* has a dossier of documents and tape recordings of telephone conversations between this informer and the crime squad which attest to his honesty and bear out his version of events. It's not a flattering portrait of British policing.

Pepe Jimenez is not a run-of-the-mill police informer, a criminal who decides to help the police entrap his friends in return for recommendation of a lighter sentence. Pepe (which is not his real name) has committed no crime. His friend did. A year ago his friend was arrested for smuggling cocaine from Colombia into England. This man took little persuading by the crime squad to see that if he helped them, they might help him. The friend phoned Pepe back home in Colombia and asked for his help.

> *'The Colombian and Bolivian cocaine syndicates are known for having effective hit-men. Miami, South American and now Europe's morgues are littered with the bodies of smaller fry who have crossed the cocaine traffickers'*

No problem. Soon Pepe was in contact with the police several times a week by telephone. Could Pepe obtain a list of guests and their passport numbers at a particular hotel in Colombia suspected of being a centre for cocaine smugglers? No problem. Could he find out whether certain South American suspects had business connections in Britain? Again, Pepe did what he could. Which seems to have been quite a lot. He got close to drug dealers. The police kept making requests, and Pepe kept sending packages of information across the Atlantic.

Finally Pepe flew to England. He was met at the airport by two officers who whisked him away to safe lodgings. He saw his friend in gaol, and was soon helping the police lure South American cocaine dealers to Europe on the prospects of setting up deals. The police provided Pepe with a telephone which, naturally, they bugged.

Soon the police were monitoring rendezvous between Pepe, posing as a potential cocaine buyer, and South American smugglers. Information from these, plus a few trips to Holland, provided the Dutch police with what they needed to carry out the arrest last August, for which Superintendent Sagar and his Yorkshire team took credit.

As *Today* wrote, "A multi-million pound cocaine smuggling racket lay in ruins last night after a daring undercover bust by British police . . . Last night the man in charge of the operation, Detective Chief Superintendent Ron Sagar, said: 'This was one of the major outlets for drug trafficking in Europe. We have broken the Bolivian connection.'"

That's when the problems set in. Pepe insists he made it clear to Superintendent Sagar and his men that once he started helping entrap South American mafiosi, he needed protection and a livelihood for himself after their cooperation was over, quite aside from helping his gaoled friend.

Pepe's argument carries some force. The Colombian and Bolivian cocaine syndicates are known for having effective hit-men. Last year Colombia's Justice Minister was gunned down in Budapest where he had been posted as ambassador for his own safety, following death threats in Bogota. Fortunately he survived. Unfortunately Miami, South American, and now Europe's morgues are becoming littered with the bodies of smaller fry who have crossed the cocaine traffickers.

New livelihood

American law enforcement agencies have what is called the Federal Witness Protection Programme, whereby informers are provided with complete new identities and livelihoods. Pepe says the police explained to him that there were somewhat similar schemes in Britain for men informing, for example, on the IRA and local crime. He understood that taxi driving is a common way of providing informers with a livelihood, especially if their English is poor.

"But Superintendent Sagar refused to put anything in writing," Pepe says. "I was told so many times, you'll be alright. Don't worry, we will see that you are looked after." So Pepe continued to help. He had no money. He couldn't safely return to Colombia. The police paid for his lodgings and put him on a meagre (£80 a week) allowance. "If I refused to help, I would be on my own." Pepe found himself trapped in an increasingly difficult situation.

Gradually, as the tape recordings of the bugged telephone conversations built up alongside tape recordings of Pepe's meetings with South American dealers in hotel rooms, the police came to acquire a remarkably vivid and detailed picture of exactly how the South American cocaine syndi-

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Praise for police drugs coup

Det Chief Supt Ronald Sagar

By DAVID ROWLEY

The work of police from West Yorkshire in smashing a multi-million pound international drugs ring was officially hailed today as a "very considerable coup".

Junior Foreign Office Minister Mr Tim Eggar added: "It is also an indication of the way in which international co-operation is increasingly succeeding against the drug trafficker."

For officers of the No 3 Regional Crime Squad based at Wakefield, travelled to Bolivia and Holland on the trail of the drug barons, it has been revealed.

The result: A Bolivian arrested in Amsterdam and a fifth haul of pure cocaine recovered from a warehouse there.

The crime squad officers first went to Bolivia

Yorks squad tracks down £12m cocaine

where — using the cover of reorganising the country's CID — they infiltrated a top drugs ring.

They got on the track of one man whose travels took him all over Europe, including a meeting with a big drugs dealer in a top Leeds hotel, reported to be the Dragonara in Neville Street.

A team of 15 officers was involved in shadowing the man around the country and abroad.

In an operation codenamed Elk, Det Chief Supt Ronald Sagar, head of the Regional Crime Squad, flew to Holland from Leeds-Bradford Airport 10 days ago with a detective inspector and a detective constable.

And they were on the scene when a man was arrested outside a hotel near Amsterdam's notorious red light district on Monday afternoon.

A man was expected to appear in court in Amsterdam today in connection with the haul.

Mr Sagar has warned that though the undercover operation is now over, officers will now concentrate on drug dealers in Britain who they know had connections with the Bolivian.

He said the operation was launched when he decided to target every South American identified in the No 3 Crime Squad's area, stretching from Nottinghamshire to County Durham.

DCS Ronald Sagar (right), whose spectacular success brought him media fame and adulation (left)

Press Association

cates now operate throughout Europe, and in particular Britain.

The police had thought the Colombians were shipping in much of their cocaine in flowers. They now know that the method was all but abandoned a year ago. A lot of it now comes in wood which has been hollowed out, stuffed with cocaine then glued back together, then coated several times with a mixture of resin and pigment, and finally sawn again leaving no signs that it has been tampered with.

Fruit is another heavily used method. Within a container load of bananas may be ten boxes containing plastic fruit stuffed with drugs. But as customs, by law, has to clear perishable cargo quickly, they must either seize the entire container or settle for a perfunctory search. Even if the false bananas are spotted and followed out of port, the drug dealer who collected them, having set himself up in the import business, simply takes the precaution of having previously arranged a legitimate purchaser on whose behalf he can say he is acting, should he be stopped.

And how does the drugs importer know which container of fruit on the boat contains the cocaine? His Colombian partner, in this case, simply finds a boat which is carrying anything but bananas, so that his consignment easily stands out. A bribe insures that the boat won't carry containers of bananas from anyone else. The same scam works with melons or any other fruit.

Perhaps most ingenious is the practice of importing cocaine oil soaked into the rubberised backing of carpets. A metre square area can hold one kilo of oil, which is extracted chemically on arrival. A shipment of carpets can hold cocaine worth, on the street, millions of pounds.

This sort of up-to-date information about smuggling state of the art is invaluable to the police. So too is information about the business side of drugs trafficking. And here too the Crime Squad discovered a great deal.

They learned how South American syndicates send representatives to Europe travelling under false passports. They then set up legitimate import companies, hire unsuspecting staff and open fresh bank accounts, leaving a clean South American telex number to contact behind. They then begin sending legitimate cargos. After a while, if everything seems in order, they slip in some cocaine. Their European agents then approach the import firms to buy.

Comic opera meetings

This was all very good stuff for the police. It got even better when they flew with Pepe to Madrid and, following some comic opera meetings in cafes and fast car drives between hotels, entrapped a Colombian smuggler who the Spanish police had watched but been unable to capture for some time. Four other arrests followed.

The press release issued by Spanish police headquarters in Madrid said that the drugs had been hidden in wooden statues which defied inspection by sniffer dogs at the airport, and could only be found by being broken apart.

Pepe grew to like the officers with whom he was working. Nonetheless he kept pressing them as to when they were going to come up with what he felt had been promised — anonymity and a new livelihood. At one point he wrote down his demands and had them read to Sagar's team. "I asked you three months ago what I could expect, and I was told the police do help, and had to understand there would be no problems . . . Today I'm worse off."

Finally, two months ago, the police announced that they would no longer pay for Pepe's lodgings. Pepe's friend, who is still awaiting trial, would have to pick up the tab. The situation had become intolerable. Pepe managed to get in touch with the local MP, Barry Sheerman, MP for Huddersfield.

Is this the way British police reward informers who are not criminals, who help them substantially, risking their own lives in the government's war against drugs crime? Or has one particular squad simply squeezed a gullible, yet valuable informer who believed in vague promises and the hope of helping a friend, with little chance of helping him in the end?

Police in Yorkshire as elsewhere prefer not to discuss operational matters. The argument is that to do so tips off criminals who then modify their methods and so continue to elude arrest. This obviously makes some sense. After all, why should the police make life more difficult for themselves, any more than the rest of us?

Nor is there any question that, as regards drugs stories, the British police and Customs like to keep a particularly tight rein on the press. Drugs are an emotional, politically highly charged issue. In today's "drugs war" the government has to be seen to be winning.

Sadly, many police — and Customs officers — admit over quiet pints that they are not doing awfully well. Drugs of all sorts — cocaine, heroin and cannabis — continue to surge into Britain, and in record quantities. Policing resources and laws framed to satisfy moral certitudes but which are operationally irrelevant (such as those demanding heavy penalties for small-time street dealers) are simply no match for today's sophisticated international bankers and business people dedicated to maximising profits in the world's number one all-

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cash business — the drugs trade.

In the circumstances, refusing to discuss operational methods is a serviceable pretext, as good a means as any for keeping reporters from challenging the government's record of success. It also predisposes less enquiring reporters to being at least a little bit grateful when the police decide to promote a drugs scoop, such as the story of the Wakefield team's cocaine bust in Amsterdam.

Barry Sheerman took the matter up with Colin Sampson, and his Deputy Chief Constable, Paul Whitehouse. He was told that as Pepe had nothing in writing, and as in any case there was no budget, the police were under no obligation to reward or protect him. The West Yorkshire police then discovered that Pepe had been tape recording their telephone conversations with him. Shortly after this Sheerman was told by the police that they would be paying for Pepe's lodgings once again. Which came as a surprise to Pepe, because he says the police hadn't told him. Sheerman has since been told that any decision has to be referred to the National Drugs Intelligence Unit, based at Scotland Yard. He has been told that because 50 per cent of the police budget comes from central government, the decision to pay Pepe depends on what may be forthcoming there. "I am appalled that a man who has risked his life to catch drug dealers has been treated this way," says Sheerman. "At first the police told me they had given no promises. Now they acknowledge they owe him something but say they have no budget."

But that seems odd. The 50 per cent funding from central government is the general contribution made to all local forces, not a specific fund for paying drugs informers. It is up to Chief Constables to decide how to use that money, whether to spend it on traffic policing, new uniforms or paying for information, whether for drugs-related or any other crime. It is not central government's responsibility to make sure informers don't feel they will be getting something when there may be nothing there.

It is common for police to pay for information. How to handle informers is regularly discussed on courses at the National Police Academy. There are Home Office guidelines, but as this is an operational matter, it is up to the local forces to decide. there are also well established precedents for providing informers with protection.

We talked to Detective Superintendent Sagar. He acknowledges that Pepe is honest and has given a great deal of assistance. "Where does anyone draw the line and say this particular piece of information is worth that particular amount of cash," asks Sagar. "If you think this is 'Thanks very much, old boy, off you go', then you've got it wrong." But Pepe is still waiting.

Comparative figures are useful. According to Home Office statistics, £2 million was spent on anti-drugs advertising agencies. David Mellor, as Home Office junior minister, made two highly publicised drugs enforcement trips to Pakistan and Bolivia just over a year ago. They were worthwhile for him. He's now junior Foreign Office minister. As for the £4½ million the British government pledged to help Bolivia and Pakistan fight drugs crime on those trips, it is, sadly, very difficult to account for how that money will be spent.

Pepe's requirements are modest by comparison, and probably much better value. "I take risks for Mr Sagar and the team," says Pepe. "Now they treat me like dirt. What about the next guy who helps the British police, who shows them how to catch Colombian mafiosi? Is he going to get treated the same?"

One may reasonably be sceptical of any informer's public spiritedness. But if Mrs Thatcher is as dedicated to the war on drugs as she says she is, her government should give more serious thought to how it treats those people who, for whatever reason, risk their lives cooperating with the police against what is, by all accounts, an extremely brutal, well organised, fast growing business. People like Pepe, for instance. In the meantime it appears as if police in Yorkshire are showing the way, fighting the drugs war on the cheap. □

BYSTANDER

The (Non-) Candidate

Will the challenge to Labour's leadership end in tears? Late-comer to the contest* MAT COWARD *tests it for laughs. Here's his manifesto

PEOPLE keep asking me, "On what platform will you be standing for Deputy Leader of the Labour Party?" And I have to explain to them that, although it is now *customary* for every individual member of the Labour Party to contest the deputy leadership, it is not yet *compulsory under rule*.

In fact, of course, I am a candidate, but I have opted for the strategy of a Mario Cuomo rather than that of a Jesse Jackson. I pin my hopes on a deadlocked party conference, at which the returning officer will announce "Eric Heffer — 33⅓ per cent; John Prescott — 33⅓ per cent; the robot from *Lost in Space* — 33⅓ per cent; Roy Hattersley — 0 per cent," and I will be adopted by universal acclamation. I have tried to inform Neil about my plans, but every time I phone, one of his kids answers and tells me "Dad says he's out at the moment". So I'll just have to hope that my election will come as a pleasant surprise to the Boss and his wife.

What are my policies? A good question, and one which can be answered quite simply — I haven't got any. Good heavens, no. It's having policies that got us all into this mess in the first place, and it's espousing policies that has ended the promising careers of more great statesmen than assassination and scandalous exposure combined.

Instead, I shall campaign on slogans, chief of which is the catchy little number *A leader without policies, for a decade without thoughts*. I don't think that will offend anyone, and as every trades unionist knows, if you never offend anyone you sooner or later end up as general secretary.

The Labour Party has always been a rainbow coalition (or broad church, as Ken Livingstone calls it), and the way to get elected is to appeal to as many different hues and pews as possible. Let me give you an example — defence. Here's an advance copy of my speech on the subject. . .

> Comrades, brothers and sisters, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, lesbian 'n' gay men, English as a second language, fellow shareholders. Can anyone here today deny that defence is the most important single issue facing our movement? Only, I suggest, by dismissing the rival claims on our attention of such matters as education, the NHS, and One Member One Vote. As deputy leader, my role will be simple: to support the agreed policy of the party in the House by attending every debate,and simultaneously touring the nation as a permanently peripatetic advocate for socialism. The Parliamentary Labour Party must not lose touch with the heartfelt feelings of the grass roots, and at the same time, and in the same breath, the party in the country must gain greater understanding of the needs of leadership. Both must be absolutely paramount as our crusade enters the 21st century, side by side with the comradely input of the movement as a whole.

Actually, that's my speech on all subjects, not just defence, and it ends with a rousing appeal to the faithful to pick themselves a deputy they know they can trust, a deputy who can revitalise the spirit of '45, a deputy who owns more than one suit and can eat a 14-course meal without spilling the wine down his tie. In phase two of the campaign, I shall reveal that such a candidate doesn't exist, and that therefore they might just as well plump for your correspondent, not least because, not being a member of parliament, I'll have more time to devote to the job.

Personal plans for my early days in office are clear. For a start, I'm going to visit every decent restaurant in the UK and charge slap-up feeds to Roy's account before the change at the top has become public knowledge. (News of this sort always takes a while to filter through to the provinces; there are parts of Britain that still think the leader of the party is Jim Callaghan. Chesterfield, for instance.) And I'm looking forward to visiting the hospitality room at the next Red Wedge thrash and trying out my new chat-up line: "Hello, darling, I'm deputy leader of the Labour Party. What colour panties are you wearing?"

I think it's important that the new deputy should not be a politician. That's why I'll be changing my title to Assistant Managing Director, or perhaps Chief Executive (Promotions). It fits in better with the corporate image of Red Rose Services International (another slight change there; did you spot it?) as a market leader in the field of community-aware leisure-direction.

I'll be holding a reception for delegates after my victory has been announced, to which you're all invited: just be sure to bring a photocopy of your ballot paper, with my name written in where it says "Other — please specify". As well as speaking out for the ordinary party member, I'll also be looking after the interest of the ordinary party-goer, so fetch along a bottle and a few nibbles and I'm sure we'll have ourselves a fine old time.

That'll also provide a good opportunity to start planning for 1989 when, of course, I shall be running for the chairmanship of the board itself. The post of deputy leader of the Labour Party is, after all, a completely honorary one, with no accompanying power or influence, full of sound and schism, but signifying nothing. Only a complete idiot would volunteer to be Number Two except to stake his claim to become Number One next time around. And as we know, there aren't any complete idiots in the Labour Party: we expelled them all, remember? □

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End of the honeymoon

JOHN CURTICE *on how to interpret next week's local election results*

OFTEN the first set of local elections in the lifetime of a parliament attracts little interest. But with not a single parliamentary by-election since last June, next Thursday's annual round gives us the first hard evidence of the state of the parties for eleven months. And of course it will be the first electoral test for the new Social and Liberal Democrats and Dr Owen's continuing SDP.

The last eleven months have been an extraordinarily quiescent period in electoral politics. Although the number of parliamentary by-elections held has fallen in recent parliaments, not since the war has there been such a long absence of parliamentary by-elections. By this stage in both of the last two parliaments there had already been two. The previously longest gap was the eight and a half months which elapsed between the October 1974 general election and the Woolwich West by-election in June the following year.

If the opinion polls are to be believed, next Thursday's local election could be a bumpy ride for the SLD. The three most recent polls (see table) have given the SLD an average of just 10 per cent of the vote and only twice as much as Dr Owen. If this is translated into votes at the local elections, the SLD faces defeat in most of the 440 seats it is defending. Nearly all of the seats being contested next week were last fought in 1984 when the Alliance's local election performance was the equivalent of 22 per cent of the vote nationwide.

The SLD has been comforting itself with its recent record in local government by-elections. Between January and March it won 27 per cent of the vote in all those by-elections contested by all three main parties. Further, some fears about the damage the merger row has done to its organisational strength appear to have been exaggerated — 2,500 candidates are being fielded, just 100 fewer than four years ago. But at all recent annual rounds of local elections its performance has been much closer to its national opinion poll rating than its local council by-election performance. In truth, the SLD's recent by-election performance has confirmed, if less dramatically, that its position now is weaker than four years ago — between January and March *1984* it secured 32 per cent of the vote in such contests.

What does "SDP" mean?

However, the split in the Alliance has not made life easy for the opinion pollsters. If people say they would vote SDP, can we be sure what they mean? Do they definitely mean to refer to Dr Owen's continuing SDP, or are they still using the term as a shorthand for the Alliance and should therefore be counted as SLD supporters? The pollsters have adopted different strategies to cope with this problem, and these differences help to account for the wide variations in the reported division of the SLD and SDP vote from approximately 50:50 (MORI) to 6 or more to 1 (Harris).

In its two March polls Harris did at least draw its respondents' attention to the new configuration of the centre. The only change it made to the usual procedure was to ask those who said "SDP" when asked how they would vote whether or not by this they meant Dr Owen's party or the SLD. But for the poll published last Sunday they stopped doing this and simply counted all those who said Dr Owen or SDP as Owenites and all those who said SLD or Liberal as SLD. This procedure helps explain the 3 point rise in SDP support since Harris's previous poll.

In contrast, all of the other companies drew some or all of their respondents' attention to the separate existence of the SDP. MORI, for example, asked all those giving an answer which implied support for the SLD or the SDP what they would do if they could choose between a SLD and SDP candidate. Marplan changed the wording of its voting intention question to remind respondents of the separate existence of the SDP and the SLD, while Gallup's voting intention question is asked of respondents only after they have given their views on the performance of the party leaders, questions which effectively inform respondents which parties currently exist.

Owen's support not high

But which procedure is right is debatable. The very few pieces of evidence we have so far suggest that Owen's support is not as high as the more favourable polls have implied. As reported in the *NS* (8 April), the SDP won just 62 votes in its first contest with the SLD (who at the same time gained the seat from the Conservatives) in a by-election in Mansfield. Further, the election nominations have revealed how thin Owen's organisational base is. Just 13 of the Alliance candidates whose tenure of office ends next week have joined the SDP, of whom only nine are defending their seats. Most voters will not be able to choose between an SLD or SDP candidate because they have no SDP candidate; they are contesting just 350 of the 3,800 seats at stake. The future of the Owenites depends on their polling well in the small number of places of traditional Liberal strength (such as Stockport, Reading and Gillingham) or recent SDP development (for example Crawley) where a number of SDP candidates are taking a stand against former allies in the SLD. In addition, they will want to show they can do as well as SLD candidates in the 20 or so places (including Birmingham, Newcastle, Wolverhampton and Portsmouth) where an electoral pact has been reached.

What the polls have said

Opinion polls since the formation of the SLD

	Dates	Con	Lab	SLD	SDP
Harris/*Observer*	2-3/3	47	36	12	2
Marplan/*Guardian*	4-8/3	45	41	8	4
MORI/*Sun Times*	17-18/3	46	39	6	7
Gallup/*Telegraph*	17-21/3	42	36½	13	6½
Harris/*Observer*	23-24/3	46	39	11	1
MORI/*Sun Times*	24-28/3	46	37	8	6
MAR. AVERAGE		**45**	**38**	**10**	**4**
Marplan/*Guardian*	8-12/4	43	42	8	5
Gallup/*Telegraph*	13-18/4	40½	41½	11	4
Harris/*Observer*	20-21/4	44	39	10	5
APR. AVERAGE		**42½**	**41**	**10**	**5**

Labour gallups

Waiting to receive the spoils of the centre's misfortunes are, of course, the Conservative and Labour parties. The recent Gallup and Marplan polls put new heart into Labour for they suggested that Labour could indeed break the 40 per cent barrier. Although last Sunday's Harris poll was not quite such good news, it also showed a drop in the Conservative lead. The long post-election Conservative honeymoon seemed as though it might be over in the wake of the continuing debate about the NHS and the furore over the poll tax and the social security changes. Labour's local election prospects received a further fillip from Gallup, which suggested that while Labour were just 1 point ahead of the Conservatives in the national vote intentions, they had a 13 point lead in local voting preferences.

But Labour is still on the defensive next week. While Mrs Thatcher may have dominated parliament in the 1980s, Labour has come to dominate the town halls. The Conservatives control only one metropolitan district council (Solihull). Almost twice as many Labour (1,800) as Tory seats (1,050) are up for grabs on Thursday. Four years ago, the local election results suggested that Conservative and Labour were neck and neck nationally at 37 per cent each. Labour need, then, to do as well as Gallup and Marplan have suggested just to hold their own against the Tories next week.

Further, Gallup's local election opinion poll was not quite such good news for Labour as it first seemed. By no means all of the country has local elections next week. They are confined to Scotland, the English metropolitan districts (outside London) and 122 (mostly the more urban) of the 333 English and Welsh non-metropolitan districts. Yet Gallup asked its local election question of all of its respondents. This probably exaggerated Labour's advantage.

But even if on the day the Conservatives retain their recent national opinion poll lead, few prizes can be expected to fall into their hands. With only one-third of the seats up for election outside Scotland, they have too much ground to recapture from their poor showing in 1986 for that. Thus they would have to do even better than last year (the equivalent of a 9 point nationwide lead over Labour) to gain control of Birmingham and Wolverhampton. On the other hand, it is the Tories who have most to gain from any disaster for the SLD and could hope to wrest control of such centres of Alliance strength as Bath, Cheltenham, Eastbourne, Winchester and NE Fife. But the biggest Scottish prize they covet is Edinburgh, where victory would suggest a reversal of their abysmal performance north of the border.

For the quickest guide to the meaning of the election results on the night, look at the pattern of seats won and lost and remember we are looking at gains and losses compared with 1984. If Labour holds its own, it will have closed the gap on the Conservatives; if it loses a lot of seats, it remains in deep trouble. If the SLD only suffers a net loss of 40 or 50 seats, they will have escaped the trauma of the last year lightly. And if the Tories fail to make net gains, the honeymoon will be over, and British politics will no longer look like a one-horse race. □

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Citizenship in the Tory democracy

Home Secretary* DOUGLAS HURD *responds to the charge of "neo-feudalism" levelled against him in a New Statesman editorial two weeks ago

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY is moving forward from its justified concern with the motor of wealth creation towards a redefinition of how the individual citizen, business and voluntary group can use resources and leisure to help the community. As we expand the scope for such voluntary acts of citizenship, the left is still stuck with the bureaucratic definition of citizenship as something to which we are compelled by the state. The *NS* is trying to goad the donkey out of the mud, but you have a long way to go before it comes free.

Despite the *NS*'s musings,the government is not about to adopt Thomas Hobbes as its patron saint. Hobbes was fascinated by how and why government came into being. From his analysis of that problem came his terrifying account of an imaginary state of nature when man warred against man, and life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". In *Leviathan*, Hobbes created a compelling myth to explain the origins of government, but he was not writing a programme for political action.

Conservatives, since Burke on, have given relatively little time to speculations about why government came into being. Our tradition concentrates instead on debating how power ought to be distributed and exercised, and how to achieve the right balance between freedom and responsibility. We take it for granted that we are dealing with fallible human beings and imperfect human institutions, and that the politician must grapple with problems which have been shaped by particular historical and cultural circumstances.

This government is not fishing for Leviathan. Underpinning our social policy are three traditions — the diffusion of power, civic obligation, and voluntary service — which are central to Conservative philosophy, and rooted in British (particularly English) history.

The diffusion of power is a bulwark against despotism and corruption, and the key to active and responsible citizenship. Men and women are social beings. But the left's picture of a society dominated by the relationship between citizen and state is a pallid image of reality. Men have affection and allegiance for many collective organisations — from a soccer club to a choral society, or even a political party. But the strongest loyalties are to family, neighbourhood and nation. "No cold relation is a zealous citizen," said Burke. "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards the love of our country, and of mankind."

> *"The thrust of government policy is to shift power outwards, away from the corporatist battalions to the small platoons"*

So the thrust of government policy is to shift power outwards, away from the corporatist battalions to the small platoons. This does not come about as a result of weekends philosophising at Chequers. It happens because, one by one, the ministers in charge of policy find that these policies are likely to work best in the hands of smaller groups. Thus parents will gain a bigger say in education. Council tenants will get more control over the management of their estates. Local radio stations will multiply under our new policy. Action against crime increasingly rests on local crime profiles and co-operation between the police and the local crime prevention panel or neighbourhood watch scheme. I do not doubt that as our policy towards the NHS matures it will rely more on the loyalties which local hospitals still readily attract.

Of course, some aspects of our policy, like the national curriculum or the uniform business rate, involve taking power from local councils to the centre in order to prevent its abuse or atrophy. But we have no grand design, no Code Napoleon to govern local endeavour. The nature of local organisations will vary according to the functions which they perform: governing bodies, tenants' co-operatives, housing associations, neighbourhood watch schemes. Our approach is pragmatic, seeking to nurture effective forms of community organisation more local and more responsive to particular circumstance than local councils. For functional reasons the local government unit has tended to become too large to retain genuine loyalties. A Local Education Authority, or a Regional Health Authority, large, bureaucratic, remote, is emphatically *not* what Burke meant by "the little platoon".

This is not "neo-feudalism", but Tory democracy. In previous centuries, when full political rights were enjoyed by few, the tradition of social obligation acted as a restraining and civilising influence upon the powerful minority. It was essentially aristocratic. Now that we have universal suffrage, general prosperity, and much greater equality of opportunity, we need to encourage the notion that civic responsibilities, too, are the property of all. They have been democratised.

The *NS* chose to excoriate the government's emphasis on voluntary work. The English tradition of voluntary service is, of course, not new. Justices of the Peace from the fifteenth century to the present, the school and vestry boards of the Victorian age, councillors in modern local government represent a longstanding tradition of public service. School governors are unpaid, so are jurors, so are residents', ratepayers' and tenants' leaders, so are neighbourhood watch co-ordinators, so are the thousands of people who give their time freely to the huge and thriving number of British charities. What *is* new is the rediscovery that schemes based on this tradition are often more flexible and more effective than bureaucratic plans drawn up on Fabian principles and inevitably bound by rules of accountability and universality which narrow their range. Perhaps even in these columns one can suggest that the WRVS has worn rather better than the Webbs.

I find it sad that the *NS* is mired in the idea that social obligation has to be "something which you *have* to do, not something you morally ought to do". If there is one lesson which socialism has taught us, it is that governments cannot legislate for neighbourliness. Compulsion by the state implies not the fulfilment, but the absence or failure of personal responsibility. Governments can no more easily create good citizens than could Dr Frankenstein create a human being. *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona.** There were radicals long before there were socialists, and they would mostly have been amazed at the modern socialist notion that it is more virtuous to lie back and be taxed than to work hard for yourself and your neighbour.

A social policy founded upon ideals of responsible and active citizenship is compatible with free market economic policies. Private property is the natural bulwark of liberty, because it ensures that economic power is not entirely concentrated in the hands of the state. It also buttresses personal responsibility, by harnessing man's acquisitive instinct to the demands of stewardship. Recent history across the world, from Britain to China, to Tanzania, to the Soviet Union, shows that an emphasis on private property and the encouragement of private wealth is necessary if the community as a whole is to prosper. The search for equality is popular only until its shrivelling effect on society becomes clear.

So the surge in home ownership and share ownership under the present government complements our policies to diffuse power in education, housing and industrial relations. Those qualities of enterprise and initiative, which are essential for the generation of material wealth, are also needed to build a family, a neighbourhood, or a nation which is able to draw on the respect, loyalty and affection of its members. □

**Ed note: "Brave men were living before Agamemnon", a quotation from Horace which continues: "...But they shone not on the poet's page, and so have been forgotten."*

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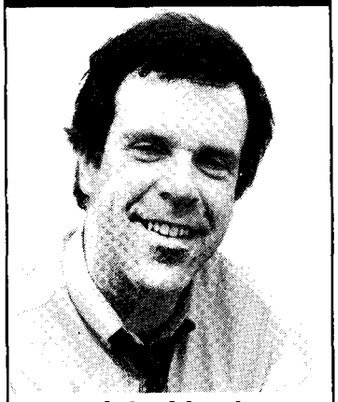
STATE OF THE NATION



John Lloyd

Race warning from across the Channel

THE 20 YEARS since the speech which made and kept Enoch Powell a household name have not seen more than a few trickles of blood shed on racial grounds: marriage, Northern Ireland and football all surpass race as an instigator of violence. From this perspective, we can see that is was not so much the River Tiber that was foaming, but him: setting a marker for the increasingly popular literary hobby of proposing Englishness as a definition which excludes the dark-skinned British.

To be sure, we know, or should know, too much now to wave Powell away as eccentric: he spoke for millions. We know, or should know, that much of the support is from people who have been frightened and disoriented by large-scale Afro-Caribbean or Asian settlements in what had been their areas of cities: settlements made up, often, of people as frightened and disoriented as their "hosts". We know, or should know, the depth of dislike which exists among inner-city white working classes towards those, like many of the readers and writers of this magazine, who characterise them as racist from the seclusion of improving terraces. Knowing this, those on the left who still lay claim to care for the *social* have a choice over the race matter which our traditions themselves have posed. Roughly put, that choice is to encourage *separation* or *integration*.

We might clarify matters by a consideration of British Jewry, seen as something of a model by those on the right who think of racial matters (and the right has been thinking a lot about racial matters, much more than the left: and that thinking is diverse). It is seen as a model for the obvious reason that it has been a spectacular success. Only three generations ago, Arthur Balfour was worrying about London and other cities being swamped by a horde of poor Jews, running from Russian anti-semitism: now, their grandchildren and great grandchildren feed the brilliance of Jewish commercial, artistic and intellectual life in Britain.

The community as a whole has risen through the ranks of British society like a stately rocket: in London, the largest city community, it has over four decades vacated the East End where it was proletarian and small trader to North London where it is enjoyably nouveau riche. Much less self-consciously and publicly Jewish than New York Jewry, it is still cohesive, ethically and religiously conservative, very largely supportive of the State of Israel (though deeply split at present on the strategy for doing so), deeply — usually too deeply to be accessible to non-Jews — scarred and consumed by the Holocaust, worried by possible loss of collective identity and skilful at preserving a balance between Jewishness and Britishness: the British and the Israeli anthems are played at most weddings and Bar-Mitzvahs.

It's possible that a substantial number of Asian British, many of whom came to the UK as small traders, and some Afro-Caribbean British, will have the same material success: some, mainly Asians, already have. But the possibility of virtually an entire ethnic group rising through the class ranks is remote, now.

THE JEWS, then, are not an ethnic model which other groups could hope to emulate. Yet they have set certain parameters which are copied by other ethnic groups and these are uncomfortable to live with. The very depth of the horror to which they have had to bear visceral witness has led them to prefer, as a community, a separateness, a collective identification with the state of Israel, which has not substantially weakened over four decades. Certainly, many Jews, while remaining proud of their ethnic identity, have chosen to intermarry and contemplate the eventual dilution of their cultural separateness: while their very enrichment tends to dissolve their distinctiveness in a gradually internationalising bourgeoisie. But as a *community*, the example they give is one of apart-ness, with an allegiance to Britain necessarily qualified — potentially, though not in actual conflict — by an allegiance to Israel.

> *'On one side the ideal is to frame public policy to prohibit discrimination as far as that is possible. On the other it is to seek to create a polyglot culture which includes other traditions but which, probably more importantly, looks for a new dynamic which can be created by all'*

The Jews themselves had role models for this. The Welsh, Scots and Irish have all qualified their allegiance to Britain: the Welsh least, since it is doubtful if they ever constituted a separate nation — but still, in the minds and hearts of many Welsh, the English are at least culturally stifling and there is an antipathy to them which spreads beyond the holiday cottage arsonists. The Scots enjoy holding on to two "nationalities", and still produce songs which would earn charges of nationalist triumphalism if transposed into an English setting. The Irish are most qualified of all, since, though Eire citizens in the UK freely use dual nationality, many — perhaps most — are at least latently anti-British when the Irish-British chips are down. We can, with the obvious Irish exception, muddle through with these contradictions and containable antipathies: however, if we want to have some confidence that we can sustain a "multicultural" society in the face of neo-Powellite efforts to reduce it to monoculturalism, we had better stop muddling.

The legacy of different nationalities and ethnic groups being "attached" to England rather than integrated into Britain has left structural problems: we cannot — as Labour has recognised — deny separate schooling to Moslems or indeed any other religious group which can demonstrate demand and some ability to meet it: but we should recognise that in doing so we are suffering a tactical retreat from an ideal whose pursuit holds the best chance we have of holding back the rivers Powell has promised us.

THAT IDEAL is to seek to minimise racial difference and distinctness in public and social life. On one side, it is to frame public policy to prohibit discrimination as far as that is possible (the fine BBC series *Black and White* showed how prevalent that still is): on the other it is to seek to create a polyglot culture which includes other traditions but which, probably more importantly, looks for new dynamic which can be created by all.

In this regard, many of the more public pronouncements of the Afro-Caribbean MPs have been of little more use than the growls of the toff nationalists. Paul Boateng's ludicrous comparison of his constituency with Soweto on election night; Diane Abbott's more recent and no less daft characterisation of Britain as the fount of racism in a speech in the US, are posturing devices, of negative use to their black and white constituents. By contrast, the less bourgeois Bernie Grant shows some signs of being willing to do a good job. As a general statement, it's a pity that they should have become MPs under the aegis of the Campaign Group: for that group has swallowed the leftist-separatist view of race, giving it pride of place in its rainbow coalition which in part replaces the class struggle. It functions as a malign counterpart to white nationalism.

We *must* take full note that Jean-Marie Le Pen's 4.3m votes is only a shade lower than the 4.46m votes garnered by the *five* candidates of the non-Mitterrand left — two Communists, two Trotskyists and an ecologist: and this in a country which has boasted the most developed left culture in the world, and once the most powerful Communist Party in the western democracies. It has not happened here, but none of us can say if an echo of it will not cross the channel, and perhaps more than an echo.

We can keep it at bay. But it means building on the common ground: improving mixed and multicultural education so that denominational education becomes an eccentricity: pushing on with anti-discrimination initiatives in employment; helping rather than disapproving marriages and child adoption across racial lines. The argument that people "prefer their own kind" is, of course, true, as far as it goes: and in a liberal society, there is no stopping them doing that. But the work of socialists should be to point to a widening of our "kind": to make the boundaries of citizenship wider — as wider they will anyway have to become if we are all to embrace a *European* citizenship which is galloping towards us and which, if we duck, will leave us declining gracelessly in mutual antipathy. □

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L'Europe, c'est socialist

DENIS MACSHANE *on how the French elections leave Mrs Thatcher isolated in the world*

Divonne

THE CLEAR VICTORY of François Mitterrand in the first round of the presidential election in France and the likelihood that he will emerge the winner on 8 May is extremely bad news for Mrs Thatcher.

The post-election analyses focusing on the support for the racist National Front who got twice the communist vote or the new-found affection between the right's standard bearers, Chirac and Barre, miss the main point.

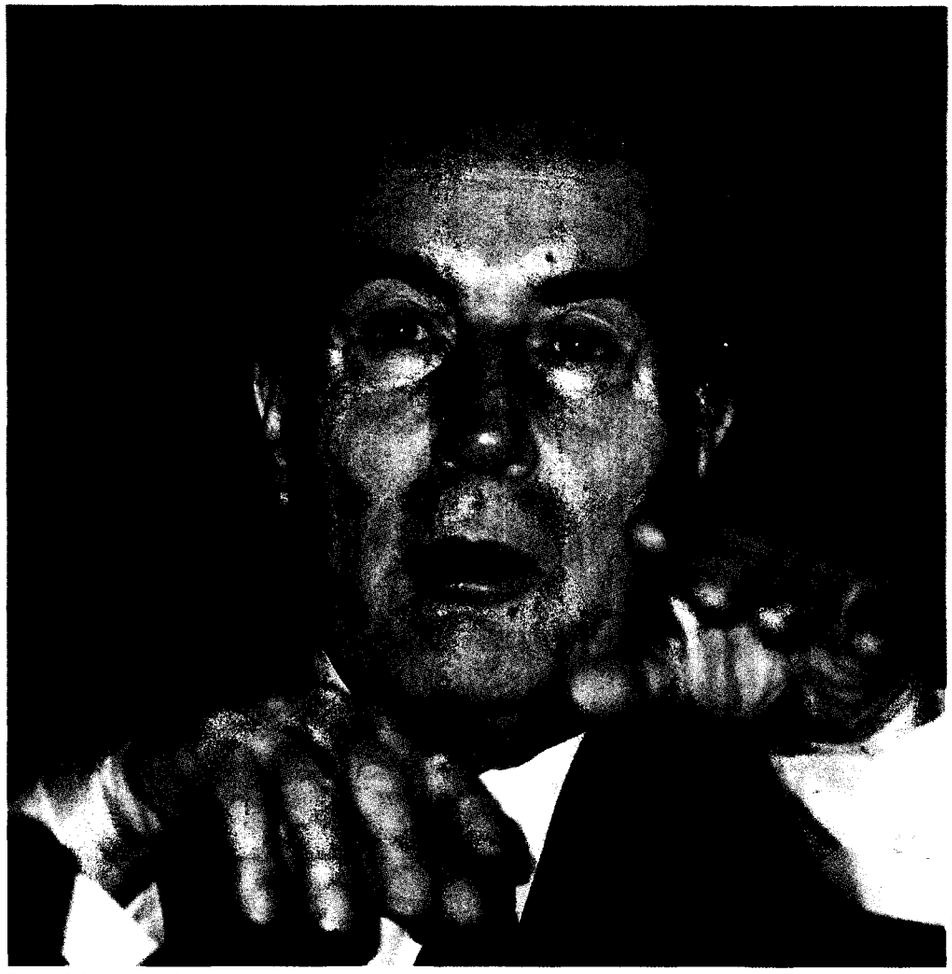
The French presidential election is a key pointer for a significant European rejection of Thatcherism. With Ronald Reagan sliding unmourned into history's dustbin in a few months' time, *la dame de fer* will enter 1989 without a true ideological friend amongst the world's leaders, unless her bizarre relationship with Mr Gorbachev counts. *Thatcherstroika* may be the rage in Moscow but for most of continental Europe it is like the English attitude towards rabies — thank God the Channel keeps the infection out.

There is a kind of awed respect for Mrs Thatcher in France for setting about the great institutions of Britain and turning them into what used to be commonplace in the France of the 1950s. Unions have been reduced to factious near-impotence; management is assertive and authoritarian; the central state rules triumphant over local suffrage; the riot police and army are brutalised; ultra-modish consumption co-exists with great poverty; some parts of industry are super-modern but trains and telephones generally don't work.

That is how the average French or German visitor to Britain reports back to their fellow citizens on a trip to London or further afield. Some of what Mrs Thatcher has done is admired. The dynamics of entrepreneurship and the market and her sheer Napoleonic zest for the politics of *l'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace* — keep biffing and bashing and never let up — have impressed some.

Mrs T. admired in Turkey

But Thatcherism is not washing over Europe. Aspects of her policies — privatisation, anti-unionism, the emphasis on the market — are to be found everywhere. But the Thatcherite project, the pulverisation of all non-centrally controlled groups, the subjection of social objectives to economic imperatives, the subordination of international policy to the erratic inconsistencies of Washington are not to be found on the continent. Only in Turgut Ozal's Turkey is a true Thatcherite to be found heading a government. In contrast, West Germany's Chancellor Kohl cannot stand being in the same room as her. West German commitment to manufacturing rather than finance capital, powerful regional government and industrial *sozialpartnershaft* is the very antithesis of Thatcherism much as the German business press laps up her anti-union politics.



Camera Press

Francois Mitterrand scatters his enemies before him

A key reason for the non-exportability of Thatcherism is that just at the moment when she and Reagan were getting into top gear, Mitterrand's election in 1981 threw a massive road block, in the form of a Socialist Party takeover of Europe's second economy, across a full-scale internationalisation of Thatcherism.

Much that Mitterrand, like his Mediterranean *confrères* in Spain, Italy and Greece, did was absolutely horrifying to socialists, especially those out of power, but the venom of the right in France has known no bounds as gradually he weakened their hold on the country. On Saturday the day before the election, *Figaro* had to publish a full-page apology in its colour supplement to Madame Mitterrand after the paper had accused her of supplying arms to her friends in South Africa and Latin America.

> *'Thank god the Channel keeps the infection of Thatcherism out'*

In his election campaign Mitterrand presented himself as the unifier of the country. In fact, what the socialists did between 1981 and 1986 was to preside over a considerable weakening of centralised power. The state takeover of companies and banks weakened the power of monopoly capital. The decentralisation policies breathed life into regions and cities. The new television and radio stations offset the power of the Hersant press. Mitterrand's vision of Europe is a further dilution of the power of Paris and the state. Far from being a force that has unified France, Mitterrand has stood for centrifugal politics. It is not classic socialism but a reinforcement of 18th century Enlightenment politics of the separation of powers. And what greater separation of powers can there be than a socialist president and a right-wing government? The re-building of civil society, which seemed to have withered away under the long rule of the right between 1958 and 1981, is well under way.

The economic austerity imposed in the last three years of the socialist government is paying off. France now has nearly twice the growth of industrial production as Britain and a lower rate of

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inflation. A Mitterrand victory on 8 May opens fascinating possibilities for a new government or fresh National Assembly elections to weaken still further the right.

The missing element is an organised labour movement able to ally itself with the Socialist Party. The splits and cretinous Stalinist leadership of French unions have reduced a once proud working class to a lumpen recruiting ground for Le Pen's racist, anti-semitic National Front. Mitterrand's embrace of anti-racism — rather as if Jim Callaghan had appeared at a Rock Against Racism concert — is one good thing about the campaign.

The French right has poured billions of francs into Jacques Chirac's coffers to be rewarded with a miserable 19 per cent vote in the first round. Chirac is the nearest France or Europe has to a Thatcher but the comparison can be overdone. Here is a list of things that French people, Mitterrand and Chirac included, like:

☐ great public projects like the *Minitel* — the telephone linked computer given free to all households or the new opera and sculptures in Paris or the Ariane space launch
☐ dynamic city and regional government
☐ high quality state education
☐ railways
☐ long holidays
☐ ideas and words
☐ Peter Brook
☐ the concept of Europe

Most of the above Mrs Thatcher actively detests or, at best, is indifferent to. That is why despite the Department of Trade and Industry's advertising, Mrs Thatcher is so hesitant about 1992. An economic integration of Europe will have to take place on continental rather than British terms. And the decentralised, regional, politically consensual Europe envisaged by the German, French, let alone the Dutch, Danish and Mediterranean states is far removed from Mrs Thatcher's vision.

She is locked in the Atlanticist concept of Europe as laid down by the Marshall Plan staff after 1948 — the union-free, weak-to-the-wall, profit-maximising Europe of business and bankers. In fact, continental Europe at the end of the twentieth century is turning out to be a more complicated project. At its core lies considerable Catholic social teaching. The church, now it no longer has the ideological duty of justifying overseas empires, or sanctifying warrior nationalism or validating anti-semitism, has become relatively hostile to uncontrollable multinational capitalism with its deleterious effects on the faithful in Latin America, the Philippines and Africa. In France, as elsewhere in Europe, church leaders are prominent on the issues of poverty, human rights and the arms race. A gulf is opening between the Vatican and Wall Street into which fall not only the bloated bodies of Archbishop Marckinkus and the P2 bankers but many of the cherished hopes of a conservative rollback.

Even if Chirac were to beat Mitterrand in the second round it is far from clear that he could, or would want to go down the Thatcher road. On the other hand, a Mitterrand victory with the new vigour it would breathe into the French left would be a definitive repudiation of Thatcherism. His politics may no longer be socialist, as defined by the more rigorous interpreters of the creed, but at least they show that there is an alternative. A Mitterrand victory on 8 May followed, say, by a Dukakis victory in America in November will leave Mrs Thatcher isolated and speaking a language no longer relevant for the next decade. ☐

EASTERN BLOC

Bulgaria chokes itself to death

CLEMENT SMITH, ***just back from Sofia, describes the hitherto unreported clampdown on the green-led protests that have been testing the regime's limited glasnost***

THE SOVIET ecological crisis has long been public knowledge. Its faithful ally Bulgaria faces equal problems, which are now occasioning a political crisis behind the scenes. The tourist brochures describe Rousse as Bulgaria's "gateway to Europe" — but this northern city, on the Rumanian border, is literally dying. For years a Rumanian copper plant has been pouring chlorine gas across the Danube into the once-lovely city. Now this has provoked a political storm.

> *'On the one hand there is increased liberty of discussion and the promise of freedom to travel abroad; on the other fears of a backlash which might seriously embarrass Gorbachev. Already, to be "pro-Russian" in intellectual circles means to be pro-reform to an extent that may be becoming risky'*

According to ubiquitous Sofia rumour, an attempt to start an environmentalist campaign has met with an official clampdown, numerous arrests and sackings, and the prospect of a big political trial — the first since the Stalin era.

Contradictory signals

In recent years the Bulgarian regime has been experimenting with its own version of reform. There has been far-reaching economic restructuring and a wholesale transformation in regional government. More cautiously, there have been moves toward greater press and intellectual freedom, though this has always been more limited than its Soviet equivalent. The signs in the air now are contradictory: on the one hand increased liberty of discussion and (again if the rumours are accurate) the promise of freedom to travel abroad; on the other fears of a backlash which, if it came, might seriously embarrass Gorbachev. Already, by an ironic reversal, to be "pro-Russian" in Bulgarian intellectual circles means to be pro-reform to an extent that may be becoming risky.

The inner-party grapevine in Sofia, Bulgaria's capital, tells of behind-the-scenes leadership shifts. Seventy-seven year-old Todor Zhivkov, First Secretary since 1954, retains his nominal supremacy: but some say he's increasingly a figurehead. Chudomir Alexandrov, the former Prime Minister sacked in early 1986, and Milko Balev, the third-ranking figure in the Politburo, are supposed to be sharing the driving seat. This, some say, is bad news for reform prospects. Balev has sometimes been touted in the western prospects. Balev has sometimes been touted in the western press as a potential Bulgarian Gorbachev: but, say Sofia sources, nothing could be further from the truth. Always known as an administrator and wire-puller rather than an ideologist, all his instincts are authoritarian.

Certainly a resurgent authoritarianism is evident in the clampdown on environmental protesters. The poisoning of Rousse first surfaced, cryptically, in the local press in 1984, but only last September was there serious public discussion. The scale of the crisis reported then is horrifying. Rousse in 1975 reported 969 cases of lung disease per 100,000 people. By 1985 this had risen to 17,386. In 1986 2,924 children and 1,546 adults were hospitalised, and 86,228 children and 62,138 adults treated as outpatients for lung disease in the town. At least 3,500 of these have a previously unknown ailment now being labelled simply "Rousse lung". There are stories of vastly increased infant mortality rates, of deformed births, of people going to work in gas-masks. Atmospheric chlorine is reported at over ten times the permitted level. After over 2,000 families had fled the city, the authorities imposed a ban on out-migration.

Pushchair protests

On 28 September hundreds of mothers with prams and pushchairs demonstrated outside the city party headquarters. Their slogan was "we don't want to die in Rousse". The protests continued in succeeding days, and were gradually picked up by sections of the national press and leading cultural figures. Heading the protest movement were Neshka Robeva, trainer of the women's gymnastic team which virtually swept the gold-medal board at the last Olympics, and internationally-known painter Svetlin Roussev, president of the Union of Bulgarian Artists. Both are also members of the National Assembly and were already marked down as troublemakers. In early September Robeva voted against the local government reforms (the first opposition vote recorded since Communist power was established) while Roussev spoke against and abstained on the vote.

A few weeks ago Robeva, Roussev and others attempted to found a national environmentalist lobby. A hall was booked and press announcements placed — and then the police struck. Robeva, Roussev and a still unknown number of others were arrested, stripped of their jobs and party membership, and are to be charged with forming an illegal organisation. The editors of the trade union newspaper *Trud* (Truth) and the main

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cultural journal *Literaturyn Front* have been sacked. The press, though still increasingly open on other matters, has fallen silent on the environment.

This clampdown is in striking contrast to the new Soviet openness about their equally severe environmental problems, but it's easy to see why the issue has become Bulgaria's flashpoint. Decades of forced-march industrialisation have made large parts of the country an ecological disaster area. The capital's air too is filthy: from the slopes of Mount Sofia one sees the city enveloped in a brown, entirely opaque hemisphere of smog. As in the USSR, life expectancy is falling and infant mortality rates rising nationwide.

Some Bulgarians now speculate gloomily about "the Rumanian scenario": a slide into the economic chaos of their northern neighbour. Party leaders must fear the equation, "Communism equals industrialisation equals pollution" forming in the popular mind

Much of the legitimacy of the regime has rested on the apparent success of rapid industrialisation. That is now running into trouble on several fronts. There are new shortages in the shops, previously well-stocked by Soviet, let alone Rumanian, standards. Coffee and potatoes, for instance, are presently almost unobtainable in Sofia (unless, of course, one has western currency). Power cuts, which in late 1985 were taking place for three hours in every six, are hitting the cities again.

Some Bulgarians now speculate gloomily about "the Rumanian scenario": a slide into the economic chaos and near-starvation of their northern neighbour. Party leaders must fear the equation, "Communism equals industrialisation equals pollution", forming in the popular mind: hence the clampdown. If "the Rumanian scenario" also meant replicating the iron cage in which Ceausescu holds his country's artists and intellectuals, Europe as well as Bulgaria would be much the poorer.

Everybody one speaks with seems passionately keen on the prospect of wide horizons. For many — academics, painters, members of the semi-illicit rock scene — the urge is largely that of proving that they can compete as equals on a world stage. Those I met, whose work I've read, viewed, listened to, can certainly do so if they get the chance. The continuing barriers mean some peculiar gaps in knowledge. Sofia's best-informed rock enthusiast (with the most amazing tape collection I've ever seen) asked plaintively for me to describe what the Smiths sound like. He'd read so much about them but been unable to get tapes. I didn't give a very coherent answer. Bulgarian musicians, and some of the young painters, though, seem to know that with a rush and a push a world audience can be theirs. Bulgarian folk music has lately become fashionable in Britain on the basis of just three records released here. What's on those few discs is *nothing* compared to the riches waiting to be heard. □

The romance of Shangri La

JOLYON JENKINS *is sceptical about the godhead of Tibet*

THOSE WHO would have it that we are a nation of sentimentalists will never find a more conclusive demonstration of their proposition than that which has been provided by the British Press during the last weeks in its comments on the coercion of Tibet. We are, most of us, of course, so abysmally ignorant with regard to foreign affairs that sentiment is always apt to have more than its proper share of influence in the determination of our views about them . . .

Forgive the flowery style — the above words are actually of 1913 vintage, and were the very first to appear in the *New Statesman*, where they referred not to Tibet but to Montenegro. But they are perfectly serviceable for Tibet. The recent visit to Britain of the Dalai Lama moved the right-wing press to an uncharacteristic interest in the affairs of faraway countries, as Dalai Lamania swept London. Had he stayed any longer he would certainly have appeared on *Wogan* (as it was, he was interviewed on television by Bernard Levin) and the Office of Tibet would probably have merchandised his image for T-shirts.

It was the exiles' view that got heard during the Dalai Lama's visit. At a meeting organised by the UK Tibet Support Committee, speakers called for "democracy to be restored to Tibet". This is preposterous

At a final packed press conference he was asked to retell the gripping story of his 1959 flight from Tibet, and invited to record a greeting to the people of the Canary Islands. (He declined the former and gamely attempted the latter, admitting that it was not a place he had visited or indeed knew much about.) The *Spectator* reported, in awe, that at a reception at the Commonwealth Institute, the guests didn't head straight for the food and drink after the speeches but stayed watching the Dalai himself. This is less impressive than it sounds: the "food and drink" were crisps and lukewarm orange juice, and my guess is that most guests were hoping the Dalai might expand on the few *very* bland platitudes he had delivered.

As with Montenegro, sentiment and ignorance informed too large a part of the British press's coverage of the visit. In Tibetan affairs, history is everything, and there are always two versions: the Tibetan exiles' and the Chinese government's. So hard is it to get to the truth about Tibet that, for example, the Minority Rights Group in its report *The Tibetans* had to publish *two* accounts of Tibetan-Chinese relationships — the first by Chris Mullin (Labour MP and one of the few Western experts on Tibet), and the second — more partial — by a Tibetan exile, Phuntsog Wangyal.

Almost always it was the exiles' view that got heard during the Dalai Lama's visit. At a well-attended public meeting in Battersea Park organised by the UK Tibet Support Committee, speakers called for "democracy to be restored to Tibet". This is preposterous: Tibet was never remotely democratic. Until 1950 it was ruled by autocratic monks, whose behaviour differed considerably from Western monkish norms. There was sometimes open warfare — with shoot-outs — between the monasteries. The monks owned most of the land and their rule was dictatorial and sometimes brutal. According to Captain W.T. O'Connor, a British agent in Tibet at the turn of the century, Tibetans were "simple agricultural people. . . oppressed by the most monstrous growth of monastacism and priest-craft which the world has ever seen." While the Chinese use the tyranny of the ancien regime to justify their entry into Tibet in 1950, some Tibetan exiles (generally aristocrats who did very well under the old order) depict old Tibet as a ludicrously unreal Shangri La. Any fair assessment of Tibetan history has to accept that religion was not a peripheral component of Tibetan society, but was the foundation of its whole structure. It is hard to see how the Chinese could have pushed through land reform and other egalitarian measures without drastically encroaching on religious freedom.

Was Tibet independent?

"Almost all Tibetan scholarship is seriously flawed by being partisan to one side or another," according to Chris Mullin. Newspapers here haven't always appreciated this. For example, the *Independent* felt that Britain had a responsibility formally to receive the Dalai: "The Dalai Lama says no country in the West has deeper links with Tibet than Britain, reaching back to the Younghusband expedition and to the Simla conference." In the Dalai Lama's version of history, Younghusband (in 1903) and Simla (1914) are of deep significance, since both ended with Britain signing treaties with Tibet. This, it is claimed, shows that Tibet was an independent country. In fact, both were highly irregular (and possibly illegal) affairs, which, far from demonstrating Tibetan independence, showed that Britain could call the shots in that part of Asia.

And, contrary to what's generally assumed, the Chinese argument that Tibet has always been part of China is not wholly bogus. Neither is the Tibetans' argument that their country was in practice completely autonomous. The question is unresolvable and verges on the theological. Was Tibet independently represented at the Asian

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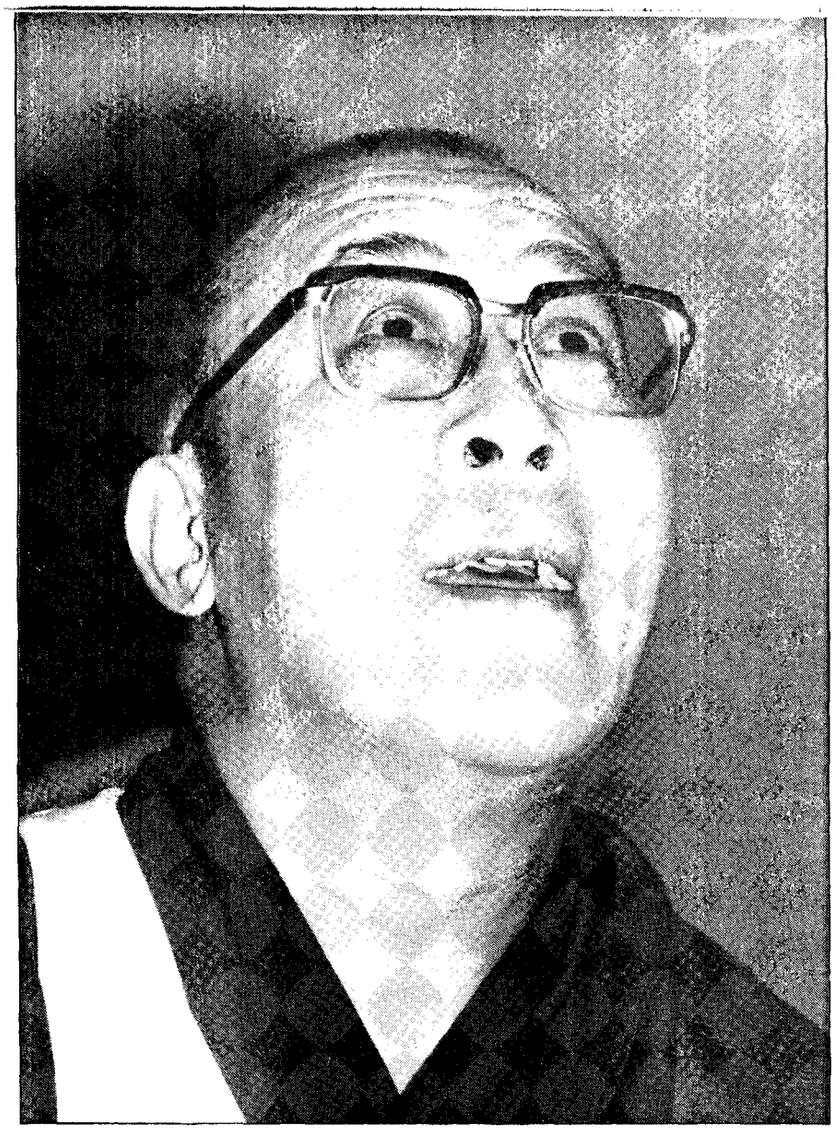

The fourteenth Dalai Lama (literally "Oceans of Wisdom") — appointed for his big ears

Camera Press

relations conference in New Delhi in 1947, as the Tibetans claim? Yes, but the organisers took down their flag after protests from the Chinese. Of such miniscule details is the debate made.

The *Independent* also urged that "Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, should read the Parliamentary Human Rights Group's recent *Human Rights in Tibet*." The leader writer appeared to be under the impression that this booklet (handed out at the Dalai Lama's press conferences) puts forward the *views* of the PHRG. In fact it was simply commissioned and published by them to "promote discussion". The author, one W.P. Ledger, is a politics student at Brunel University, who has summarised the existing literature. It is not an impressive work. It uncritically cites sources which are deeply flawed: for example, two International Commission of Jurists' reports in 1959 and 1960 which concluded that the Tibetans faced "cultural genocide". The ICJ's shoddy methodology — it relied almost entirely on the testimony of exiles, and made no attempt at cross-examination — not to mention the fact that it was funded by the CIA, makes it highly suspect. One woman, commissioned by them to collect atrocity stories, eventually gave up because she found it impossible to assess their veracity.

Ledger also reproduces, without comment, a table from the Dalai Lama's office which gives a total figure of 1,207,387 Tibetans dead as a direct result of Chinese rule between 1950 and 1984. The figure is broken down into "Battles and Uprisings", "Starvation", "Prisons and Labour Camps", "Execution", "Torture" and "Suicide" — each to the allegedly exact number dead. Such numbers are entirely unsubstantiated. According to Mullin: "All figures relating to Tibet are extremely suspect. Regrettably, many Tibetan exiles have chosen to exaggerate what has happened, and have undermined their own credibility. The truth is bad enough without them having to exaggerate."

Mullin is quite right. There are ample grounds for criticising the Chinese rule of Tibet without recourse to fiction. Plenty of people in Eastern Tibet were taken away to labour camps and never came back. During the cultural revolution the Chinese tried systematically to expunge religion from Tibet. People — it's impossible to know how many — were undoubtedly killed or committed suicide. There has been a ruthless attempt to replace Tibetan culture with Chinese, and the Tibetan people have been nearly overwhelmed by immigration of ethnic Chinese. Even on its own terms the policy has been a failure. Despite having control of the education system for 40 years, the Chinese still don't feel able to put Tibetans in positions of power — while outside Tibet, there are plenty of well-educated young Tibetan exiles.

Praise for Mao

Even the Dalai Lama himself hasn't been immune from the tendency to exaggerate, nor from suspect political judgement. He has found it hard to acknowledge that he co-operated closely with the Chinese in the early years. In 1951 his officials signed the 17 point agreement with China, which agreed to co-operate with the Chinese in return for certain guarantees. After he fled into exile he claimed that the agreement had been signed under duress and that Tibetan seals used were actually forgeries made in Beijing. The fact that this complaint took eight years to surface renders it a bit suspicious, particularly given his behaviour in the intervening years. In 1954, for example, he went to Beijing, and while there wrote the following unlikely poem to Mao Tse-Tung:

> O! Chairman Mao! Your brilliance and deeds are like those of Brahm and Mahasammata, creators of the world
> Your writings are precious as pearls, abundant and powerful as the high tide of the ocean reaching the edges

Only many years later did the Dalai Lama acknowledge authorship of this gem. He also made allegations about forced sterilisation of Tibetans, which he was never able to substantiate and which were almost certainly false. Other claims he has made about the size of the Tibetan population — based on secret Chinese documents he claimed to have seen — are equally implausible.

To be fair, much of this slightly wild behaviour dates from the 1950s and early 60s, when he was young and over-influenced by his advisers. (It is not impossible that his "flight" from Tibet in 1959 was actually an abduction by these advisers.) Nowadays he is his own man and far more circumspect. For example, at his final press conference he was asked whether he endorsed Lord Ennals' report that the Chinese were still carrying out atrocities in Tibet. He refused to commit himself, saying only that journalists should go to Tibet and carry out their own investigations.

The more plausible charge against him is that his caution makes it hard to work out what his programme really is. His "five point peace plan" for Tibet, which he produced last year, is extraordinarily vague. It includes, for example, proposals for the "transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace", and for "commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples". Although it specifically calls for an end to China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons, curiously it doesn't even mention religious freedom.

But while it's clear that the Dalai Lama himself is prepared to make substantial compromises, not all his supporters are so accommodating. At his press conference he was asked whether he would be prepared to accept a deal which fell short of full Tibetan independence. He replied: "The Chinese government will never give up Tibet, and [find it] very difficult to accept the independence of Tibet. . . As chief spokesman for the Tibetan people I feel there is nothing wrong to try to explore some middle way. But if you further ask 'what kind of middle way?' then at the moment I have no clear answer. If everything comes out from the pocket, then the pockets become empty." When the *Guardian* reported the above exchange, it received and published a letter which invented a further false quote (I know it's false because I taped the conference) to imply that the Dalai Lama was saying that sovereignty was non-negotiable.

With friends like his, the Dalai Lama needs to keep his wits about him. Considering his upbringing, and the fact that he got the job partly because of his big ears and moles under his arms (the patron deity of Tibet, of whom he is the 14th incarnation, had big ears and four arms — the moles replace the second set) it's remarkable that he has matured into any kind of effective politician. □

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Big, rotten apple

ALEXANDER COCKBURN *on a place that "really does bring out the worst in people"*

New York

THE TWO BIG EVENTS in New York's recent past have been the Democratic primary and the Warhol sale. In their separate ways they were both testament to what a repellent city this has become.

The auction of Andy Warhol's possessions had been very successfully touted by Sotheby's and when I went along to look at the stuff a few days before the sale got under way the crowds were tremendous. The objects seemed oddly tacky, either in condition or in affect. Warhol was a determined shopper, spending a few hours every day in the jewel shops, antique stores, galleries and fleamarkets. His eye does not seem to have been peculiarly acute and the thousands of items set out in the auction house felt more like a horde of fungible commodities than a collection of things the artist actually cared for. But that is probably an impression the artist would not have disputed since he often came home with the day's acquisitions, sealed them in a box labelled "Time Capsule" with the relevant date and then stored them away, against the day they would be exhumed and sold, thus annotating Warhol's obsessive interest in value and the circulation of commodities. In this sense the auction was not a dismemberment but an appropriate end to his life's project.

So there all the bits and pieces were, like a sort of wastepaper basket of the American imagination, from idealised photographs of American Indians on the great plains to the last folio of Marilyn Monroe. There too were the thick crowds admiring and coveting the contents of the wastepaper basket, precisely because they — Monroe pictures, cookie jars, fiesta ware, fifties jewelry, Elgin watches — had been owned by Warhol.

This was always Warhol's trick. He once said, "What's great about this country is that America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you can know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good, Liz Taylor knows it, the President knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it." He could have added that the way the rich person could get a better Coke was to have the bottle signed, or owned by Warhol, thus leading to such moments last week as the crying of Lot 892: "Glass Coca-Cola advertising electrical lamp. Together with a large glass Coca-Cola advertising bottle. (2) *H. 27 in.* ($200-$300)."

There was a time when Warhol was genuinely avant-garde, until the urgent imperative whispered to Woodward and Bernstein by Watergate's Deep Throat became overwhelming and all-obliterating: "Follow the money." Somewhere in the late 1970s, probably when they realised that Ronald Reagan and the tax reform bill were at hand, the rich, particularly in New York, lost all self-control and began to consume with a conspicuousness that soon made it possible to walk across mid-Manhattan on the roofs of stretched limousines.

> *"Not one of the innumerable opinion formers, columnists and reporters swarming round the candidates as they rushed from stump to stump felt able to ask Gore or Dukakis how they felt about Israeli soldiers forcing an Arab up a telegraph pole until he was electrocuted"*

North of 110th street, just to restore one's sense of balance, one can similarly walk across the island on the bodies of the homeless. Echoing this ugliness which it condoned and fostered, the political culture of the city took on an acrid toxicity not to be encountered elsewhere. New York is a city that now boasts among its spiritual guides a mayor, Ed Koch, who is a specialist in racist buffoonery: an ultra-right senator called Al d' Amato who won the attention of the voters by discoursing on the beauties of the electric chair: a Roman Catholic cardinal, John O'Connor, after Woytila's heart; a brutish sports czar, owner of the Yankees, called George Steinbrenner; radio and television talk shows hosts of loutishly right-wing disposition and a leading newspaper, the *New York Times*, slightly less loutish but similarly reactionary in outlook. No other town condemns its inhabitants to listen to men like these on virtually a daily basis. Just as the Warhol auction gave one the timbre of the times, so too did the recent presidential primary election show how such exponents of those listed above have shaped the political life of New York. The place really does bring out the worst in people.

Nothing but the worst

It took New York to provoke, at its most morally degraded intensity, the sickening rhetorical rituals mandatory in grubbing for the Jewish vote. First came the grotesque spectacle of Al Gore baiting Michael Dukakis for insufficient fervour towards Israel. Everyone knows that Dukakais has been a model of traditional Democratic cowardice on this issue, though less craven than Gore who went openly begging to pro-Likud contributors, from whom Dukakis kept his distance. Then Gore got respectful attention in the press for proclaiming that Jesse Jackson had disqualified himself from pretension to high office by placing Israeli and Palestinian aspirations on the same moral plane.

Not one of the innumerable opinion formers, columnists and reporters swarming round the candidates as they rushed from stump to stump, apparently felt able to ask Gore or Dukakis how they felt about Israeli soldiers forcing an Arab up a telegraph pole until he was electrocuted, or whether they would be able to condemn the Israeli army for blowing up houses in the village of Beita *after* the army had established that Tirza Porat, the young Israeli woman, had been killed by a shot from the Israeli Gush Emunim fanatic, Ruman Aldubi. The villager who bent Aldubi's gun barrel, stopping him from killing others beyond the Palestinian farmer and Jewish girl he had already slain was subsequently deported by the Israeli army.

In the end Jackson buckled under the obsessive scrutiny of his views on Israel. Koch started the ball rolling with his announcement that Jews "would have to be crazy" to vote for Jackson. On *Face The Nation* (an important network Sunday show) for 10 April, Jackson was asked by Lesley Stahl, "Would you sit down with Arafat?" Jackson: "I would not. It is not necessary to do that. We must not equate Arafat and the PLO with a sovereign people — the Palestinian people . . . We have to search for the quality and combination of leadership on both sides, whether it's Abba Eban or Peres on the one hand, or more sensitive Arabs or Palestinians on the other." His concern, Jackson told Stahl, was "that we must somehow get Israel beyond the burden of occupation, and the Palestinians beyond the pain of being occupied." Jackson made these even-handed observations shortly after Porat's funeral, at which Israel's Minister of Religious Affairs, Zevulum Hammer, said, "Beita does not exist on the map of Israel. A settlement should be built there and named Tirza Porat." Shamir said the killing strengthened the determination to hold on to "all the land of Israel". Some burden.

After a crescendo of abuse for Jackson by Koch, acting as surrogate for Gore, the voters retired to the polling booths and recorded a substantial victory for Dukakis who took the state from Jackson, 51 per cent to 38. Jackson took New York City by a narrow margin winning 97 per cent of the black vote, 59 per cent of this Hispanic vote, 15 per cent of the white vote, and 8 per cent of the Jewish part thereof.

For Jackson, even though he did win the Big Apple itself, the campaign was cruel. To a city of crumbling ghettoes, teenage junkies, derelicts, welfare hotels, he brought his message of moral renewal and social compassion and was forced to spend most of his time apologising for his 'Hymietown remark" to people who thought nothing of it that Shamir called Palestinians grasshoppers, just as they felt no need to distance themselves in times gone by from chief of staff Eitan who once called them "drugged roaches in a bottle".

A touch of evil

No list of persons contributing to the degraded quality of political discourse in New York would be properly complete without that of Henry Kissinger, who has retained through each fresh disclosure of his villainies the status of super-pundit, albeit somewhat more moth-eaten than in

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the days of his greatest glory when he was still fresh from murdering Vietnamese, helping engineer the overthrow of Allende and exhibiting kindred instances of "resolve". The most recent disclosure of the Hyde-like monster swaddled in the accented verbiage of Jekyll-the-Statesman is germane to the obsessions I have been describing.

At the start of February Kissinger attended one of the innumerable off-the-record sessions being conducted by leaders of the American-Jewish community to consider what their response should be to the uprising on the West Bank and Gaza. On this occasion his judicious observations, as recorded by one of the participants, Julius Berman, and distributed to interested parties, were leaked to the press. The report gives one a clear, if chilling, vignette of the elder statesman letting his hair down.

> I attended a private "off-the-record" breakfast meeting with Henry Kissinger early this week to discuss the current situation in the Mideast.
>
> In sum, Dr Kissinger conveyed three major points, as follows:
>
> 1. *Now* is *not* the time for Jewish community leaders to publicly attack Israel or its policies with respect to the Palestinians;
>
> 2. Israel should bar the media from entry into the territories involved in the present demonstrations, accept the short-term criticism of the world press for such conduct, and put down the insurrection as quickly as possible — overwhelmingly, brutally and rapidly.
>
> 3. The proposed International Peace Conference, as presently conceived by Foreign Minister Peres, may lead to a "disaster" for Israel.
>
> Focussing on the situation in the last few weeks in Israel, Kissinger appropriately noted that Israel's public relations were horrible. In his opinion, it made two major mistakes. First, it did not throw all of the media out of the relevant territories. Second, it annouced that it would "beat" the participants in the violence (and not shoot them). Israel may have felt that that approach was more humanitarian, but they overlooked the fact that when you "beat" someone it means you already have control of that person and can no longer claim self-defence.
>
> Kissinger repeatedly emphasized that, under no circumstances, should Israel make *any* concessions during the present insurrection. If one learns anything from the history of revolutions, such as the Russian or French Revolution, it is that concessions during an insurrection merely accelerate the revolution rather than hastening its end. Therefore, what is critical at this time is to put down the insurrection as quickly as possible. It was at that point that Kissinger added that he "really thinks that Jewish leaders should not yell at Israel now and make them even more paranoic." We must close ranks and not let the enemy utilize quotations from Jewish leaders as evidence to support their position about Israel in general.

Among those to whom Kissinger was making these confidential statements about smashing heads and expelling the press was Lawrence Tisch, a man who controls CBS, whose news reports from Israel and the territories have been particularly striking. It is not known what Tisch said in response to Kissinger.

There's no doubt that many American Jews feel, ludicrously, that the media have been unfair to Israel and that in some unspecified way the tribulations of the Palestinians have been got up by propagandists. This emotion is well captured in the following sentence by Ruth Wisse in the May issue of *Commentary*: "The obvious key to the success of Arab strategy is the presence, in the disputed territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan River, of Palestinian Arabs, people who breed and bleed and advertise their misery." *Commentary*, I should add, is edited by the neo-conservative Norman Podhoretz who will not be called upon by polite society to apologise, in the manner required of Jackson, for the racism of Ms Wisse's reflections.

But beyond the New York primary, Henry Kissinger, Ruth Wisse and Norman Podhoretz, what do Jews and non-Jews in the United States think about what is going on on the West Bank and in Gaza? The most thorough poll yet to survey such opinion was recently conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* and published on 12 April. It showed that American Jews overwhelmingly support the idea of an international peace conference on the Middle East and have a more favourable impression of George Shultz than of Yitzhak Shamir (a real Hobson's Choice if ever I saw one). Moreover 41 per cent of Jews and 65 per cent of non-Jews "feel that there is an element of racism involved in the attitude of Israelis towards Arabs" and only one out of three non-Jews has a favourable impression of the Israeli government. A majority of non-Jews (52 per cent) favours US negotiations with the PLO and 50 per cent would approve of a Palestinian homeland in the occupied territories; 29 per cent of Jews supported both American talks with the PLO and the establishment of a national home for the Palestinians.

In other words, the support for a just settlement is there: all that is required is the courageous political leadership against which the arbiters of New York so determinedly set their faces. □

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A group from Plaw Hatch on a previous visit to Red Square

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BOOKS

The most shameless thing

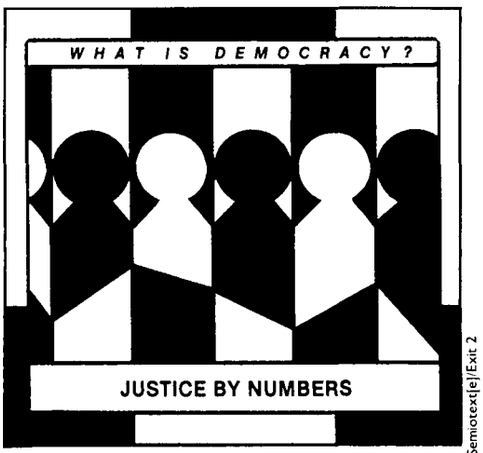
What becomes of democracy when individual autonomy is something you exercise in supermarkets, and solidarity is a memory of something that happened in Poland? **ZYGMUNT BAUMAN** *reflects on freedom and compassion in the light of two new essay collections from* **JOHN KEANE**

TOGETHER, THE TWO complementary volumes from John Keane* constitute the most massive attempt to date to re-evaluate all traditional values of the left. As the left was born and lived until now as the counter-culture of society, both capitalist and modern, these two books also represent an ambitious attempt to re-evaluate the most basic values of modernity.

Individual freedom and autonomy. Civil liberties. Freedom to enter contract, and to opt out. Plurality of ideals, life-styles and life-projects. Powers we elect and demand to represent us. We have all these: the liberal-democratic project of capitalist modernity has delivered on its promise. And yet, we feel like repeating after W.H. Auden:

> The situation of our time
> Surrounds us like a baffling crime

Like Winston Churchill's democracy, this modern/capitalist freedom of ours seems the most awful of human conditions — with the exception of, that is, any other human condition. . . Without it, we cannot breathe. With it, we cannot be happy. As it stands, we do not expect it to make us more happy on its own initiative. Yet, unlike in the starry-eyed years of the left's adolescence, we are not quite sure we know how to force it.



We have tried enough substitutes to know that there is no happy life after democracy; and we have had enough experience of democracy to know that the happiness it produces comes complete with misery. This is what we call "the crisis of socialism". Thus I agree with Keane that, whatever the reasons for this crisis, they are important for "democrats of *all* persuasions".

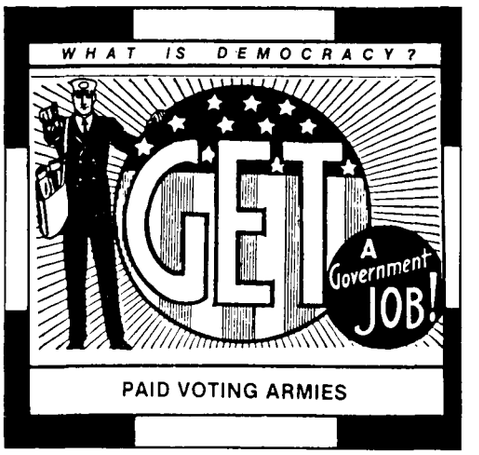
Like Keane, I feel that the reasons should be sought, and perhaps can be found, in the grey area extending between *civil society* (that is, the place where we make things and ideas, talk and dream, live our family life, come together and fall apart), and the state. Perhaps what we need is to expand the first and to roll back the second. Or to "restructure" both. Or, better still, to make the first more interested in, and aggressive towards, the second. In Keane's juicy phrase, "*civil society should become a permanent thorn in the side of political power*". In making civil society such a thorn, the leftists, the democrats, the "modernists" (enthusiasts of plurality for its own sake) can, should, and will join forces. Only such a coalition can conceivably preserve what is good in democracy, while purifying it of its wrongs.

This, I think, is the central message of both volumes: Democracy is good. It serves well the cause of human liberty — always a supreme goal of the left. It can be made better still. It can be made to serve the cause of social justice — something the left did not quite believe it would.

As far as democracy goes, there is little in the left's past record to boast about. In theory, socialists went out of their way to prove that "capitalist democracy" is nothing but sham and concealed slavery. In practice, their own "socialist" version of democracy proved to be just that — what they said the capitalist version was, but was not. It is time to repent. Keane's volumes are an act of penitence. His analysis of sinful past is sharp, penetrating — and right.

We know now that the human emancipation does not stand a chance *without* democracy. What we do not know yet, is whether it does stand a chance *with* it. Like most reformed sinners, we may be too preoccupied with pillorying our past ignorance to pay the present one the attention it deserves. We may fail to notice that while democracy has discredited our past jibes many times over, it has done little yet to warrant our present hopes of a cooperative, self-managing society. Unsurprisingly, unlike the criticism of the theory and practice of "socialist democracy", the agruments for the *socialist* potential of formal democracy are tentative, empirically shallow — and vague.

In the words of Agnes Heller, one of the many distinguished contributors to Keane's compendium: "formal democracy leaves open and undecided the problem of the concrete structure of society. . . [T]he same democratic principles — since they are formal — can be the fundamental principles of both a capitalist and a socialist society incorporated in a constitution." I wish Heller to be right, and feel that if she is not, then there is something wrong with socialism rather than democracy. And yet all instances of formal democracy in operation I can think of "incorporated" a capitalist, not a socialist, society. The possibility of another content of this particular political form has so far been our only hope — an intense, zealous hope, to be sure — to stand on. Like loaded dice, formal democracy, once set in motion, seems to fall always on the capitalist side.



It can be argued that the most important (and, let us hope, lasting) accomplishment of the socialist idea is to make it impossible to live happily and to sleep quietly among human misery and poverty; and to make those who can sleep quietly feel the need to apologise. Among the values Keane's compendium has undertaken to re-evaluate, this one — the value of compassion — has escaped revision. This is good news. The bad news is that it has well-nigh escaped attention. John Keane and his co-authors are concerned with enhancing the wonderful capacity of formal democracy to enable people to do what they wish to do. Somewhat less do they concern themselves with the amply demonstrated tendency of formal democracy to make "enablement" into a privilege, and into a principle of ever deeper division between two ever more distinct human conditions. So far, democratically enabled citizens have chosen to support the

* *John Keane: "Democracy and Civil Society" (Verso, £24.95 & £8.95); John Keane, Ed: "Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives" (Verso, £32.95 & £10.95). Contributors to the latter include Norberto Bobbio, Agnes Heller, Norbert Elias, Claus Offe and Václav Havel. Zygmunt Bauman's most recent book is "Legislators and Interpreters" (Polity).*

Semiotext(e)/Exit 2

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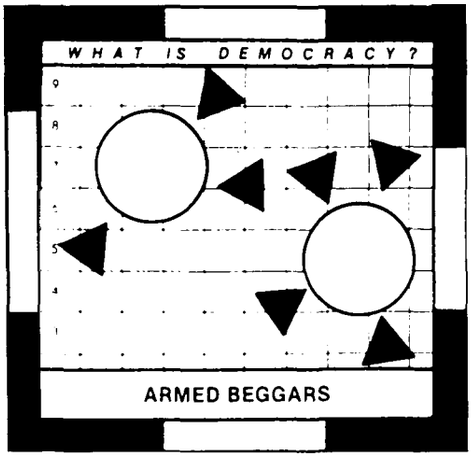
practice of making the rich work harder by giving them more, and making the poor work harder by giving them less.

Years ago the welfare state was introduced as an *enabling* device. It was hoped (do we remember it still?) that with their basic survival needs guaranteed, people would spread their wings and fly. The welfare state was to be a marriage between human solidarity and human autonomy. Today, whatever remains of the welfare state works as a device to stigmatise those with clipped wings. The guarantee of survival has turned into a certificate of *disablement*. Having shifted the whole financial burden of such a guarantee onto the shoulders of the lower-paid citizens, Lawson's latest tax reform will add more bitterness and mutual acrimony to the divorce between solidarity and autonomy. We will have more democratic autonomy for the enabled, more dictatorship over the needs of the disabled.

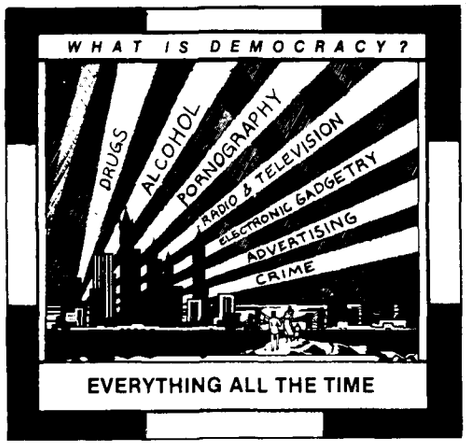
With the advent of the consumer society, we have forgotten the skills which could give us livelihood, identity and human company without mass-produced and marketed tools. We have learned instead skills which need commodities to be of any use to us. If we are "enabled", we depend on the market. If we are disabled, we depend on the State to give us what we cannot take. At a time when Keane rejects the duality of State and the market as a false *theoretical* dilemma, it has become the basis of the new duality of the *practical* human condition.



As defined by the consumer market, today autonomy means buying freedom from politics. Of the two attitudes towards state and politics (as distinguished by O.A. Hirschman), the consumer market promotes the *exit* and silences *voice*. Autonomy is sought and found away from political battlefields, in the freedom of commodity choice. Those who cannot afford tickets for the escape trip have their voice stifled anyway by the soporific hum of the supermarkets. We now know only too well that the enabling capacity of formal democracy cannot be wed to state dictatorship over human needs. But can it be wed to the consumer market? State dictatorship destroys human autonomy. The consumer market destroys human solidarity. Without autonomy, solidarity turns into oppression. Without solidarity, autonomy takes the form of glittering cars and shining teeth.

Not raising these doubts forcefully enough seems to be the major weakness of these volumes. Still incensed by the recent divorce, we are not in a good mood to contemplate the possibility of another one. We hope against hope that the next marriage stands a better chance to succeed. Let us make sure that this time we are right. To paraphrase Marx — if the first disenchantment was a tragedy, the second may well turn out to be a farce.

I think no one has better expressed the quandary which prompted Keane to produce his two volumes (and this reviewer to record his comments), than Roberto Mangabeira Unger: "Some modern doctrines tell us that we already live in societies in which we can fully satisfy [our] desires. Others urge us to give them up as unrealistic. But the first teaching is hard to believe; the second is hard to practice." □



Continental drift up blind alleys

Robin Blackburn

Europe and the Rise of Capitalism:
ed. JEAN BAECHLER, JOHN A. HALL and MICHAEL MANN *Blackwell* £25

THE SCOPE of this collection is wider than the title might suggest. Nearly half of the contributions are focused on the historically non-capitalist pattern of non-European societies, while a number of others, notably those by the three editors, look at the whole sweep of human history in their attempt to identify why the breakthrough to modernity or capitalism was made at a particular time in a small part of Western Europe.

What we have here is a spin-off of the recent remarkable resurgence of historical sociology. While some Marxists or former Marxists plunge deeper into philosophy and methodology, a new non-Marxist school of "historical materialism" is developing which devotes itself to those large questions about broad spans of human history which used to be the special preserve of "scientific socialism". In his introduction to this volume Ernest Gellner argues that European development was an aberration, not a norm, and that any search for social progress must be historically informed. He mocks those "diverse patented methods — linguistic, phenomenological, formal-logical, contractarian and other" which claim to lift us out of history into a realm where human beings freely invent the social relations they find most ethnically desirable.

The new "historical materialism" prefers to study the slow and irregular development of social powers in the course of humanity's history, and to interest itself in blind alleys and elephant traps as much as in the by-road leading to modernity. From the standpoint of state construction, Europe's development can be seen as failure rather than success, a failure which allowed for the more autonomous development of civil society as capitalist social relations took hold. John Hall remarks at one point that there is a risk that this approach might come to look too much like a Thatcherite paean of praise for the market and for a minimal state. Yet even in the account given here of the origins of capitalism, extra-market forces are seen as vital to the success of market relations in promoting economic development.

There are, in fact, three reasons why this body of work should be of special interest to socialists. First, because it draws attention to the geographical, historical and material factors which explain the different fate of the different portions of humanity, without recourse to perilous ethnocultural speculations. Second, because it explores the deep structures which allowed relatively weak and highly competitive states to develop in Western Europe, illuminating the ways in which capitalism needs and reproduces such a pattern. The capitalist West, having thrived in this peculiar and self-reinforcing way, is likely to be inherently resistant to that global regulation that may be required to tackle the arms race, ecological threats, economic chaos and inequality. And, third, at least some of the new historical materialism draws attention to the role of state initiative and coordination in social development.

Not all contributors are historical sociologists of the sort I have described, though it is they who appear to have set the tone of the symposium on which the book is based. Thus Alan MacFarlane contributes a paper in which he disputes Robert Brenner's theses on the origins of capitalism while Peter Burke writes on European merchant republics. One of the most satisfying essays, Chris Wickham's "Uniqueness of the East", is written from a Marxist standpoint and makes out a strong case for identifying certain common structures in those agrarian societies that did not make the transition. This contribution, serving as a pivot of the book, is a welcome reminder that some Marxists still do take an interest in historical materialism; and for the same reason I was interested to note that Brenner survives the MacFarlane critique without a scratch.

This is not a book about the heavy cost of the rise of the capitalist West and one suspects that some contributors have not much pondered what the cost has been, or remains. But presumably socialist readers can be left to follow up such thoughts for themselves. Meanwhile, if they are interested in considering the pre-conditions for social transformations they will find food for reflection here. □

Robin Blackburn's "The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848" has just been published by Verso.

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PAPERBACKS

Priests and soldiers

Paul Hallam

IN PHILIP O'CONNOR's **Memoirs of a Public Baby** (Intro. Stephen Spender, Fourth Estate, £5.95) England is seen as a country where "a spade is a spade" passes for thought, morality, even science. Its middle class forever sounds its "moral motor horns" or displays a cruel, surface decency. School was "a typical ecclesiastical laundry of rexine culture for the soaping out of human juices". Teachers' jaws opened like shop-tills.

As a child, O'Connor was handed into the care of a Frenchwoman, finding solace in the crash of her urine on an enamelled pail. The older O'Connor delves briefly into spritualism, bohemianism and finally communism. He writes surrealist poems and then mocks their publishers.

Diagnosed as a schizophrenic, he is an alarming and acid autobiographer. If he found some hope in humanism and what he calls humanism's maturity in socialism, you still feel he couldn't easily have fitted in anywhere.

Twee woodcuts adorn Fraser Harrisons's **A Winter's Tale** (Flamingo, £3.95), a wincemakingly candid account of fatherhood and a marital crisis.

Do you really want to know that he and his wife decided to sing "Chatanooga Choo-Choo" during her contractions? Harrison veers between over-elaborate natural metaphor and the melodrama of self: "I can't go on. I have lost faith in what I am writing. My journey has failed." The symbolism irritates too — his son can't dig a hole without Father seeing it as sexual, or as a reflection of family tension. He does write with admirable honesty about the birth of his son, how witnessing it affected his sexual feelings. But the wince returns with the vagina described as a "cauldron of ecstasy". I also felt for the children, observed so closely in their supposedly "private" worlds.

Frank O'Connor's descriptions of country and country people in **Irish Miles** (Hogarth, £5.95) are fresh and tough. He can admit, on his 1945 bicycling tour, that there "was no history on us" when faced with a monument, and be sidetracked by the rhythms of a pub conversation. His irish landscape is scarred, a reflection on the damage done by priests and soldiers. He has no time for those who witter on about declining morals, or the decay in children's teeth. It's really an essay on the Irish character. In a blackly comic, imaginary conversation with a church, the church declares: "I say this country has no future. No future!" He can wonder at the landscapes of Connemara, "theatrical to the last degree . . . but lonesome beyond belief", but seems happier in sardonic asides: "Life is too short to discover the reason for all the ruins in Ireland".

Some of the reasons preoccupied Edmund Burke right up to his death in 1797. **Irish Affairs** (Intro. Conor Cruise O'Brien, Hutchinson, £6.95) is an angry plea for Catholic rights. He argues that, if freedom of worship, education, trade, land ownership, and self-defence are denied to Catholics, then Jacobinism will take root. The barbaric and inefficacious laws against the Catholics were not, as claimed, to prevent the growth of Popery at all, but rather to persecute those already engaged in it.

He calls for healing: "Toleration . . . ought to be tender and large . . . tolerant Government ought not to be too scrupulous in its investigations of religions", nor even, he adds, of many an adult vice. Irish problems are not about Popes but potatoes, and he has no truck with any government pleading reasons of state and security to justify slavery.

The Irish setting is used to powerful effect in Jeannette Haien's **The All of It**, (Faber, £3.50). A priest hears the story of a respected elderly couple after the man's death; the "couple" turn out to be brother and sister. The priest — friend, confessor and finally suitor to the bereaved woman — discovers that their drunken father left her and her brother locked in their childhood home.

In a sharp historical note we learn that they couldn't escape since the windows were mere slits, the result of an English tax on windows. They made love to fight the cold and despair. Free, they pretended to be married to find work in an English household, but hated the "bells and chimes and gongs" of its owners. It's a graceful and passionate story of feelings not easily put to rest. The priest, like the reader perhaps, breaks the beauty of the woman's narrative with his voyeuristic need to know whether the relationship was sexual after the excuse of cold was gone.

The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci by Jonathan D. Spence (Faber, £5.95) is the biography of a 16th-century Jesuit missionary in China, whose vainest hope was to convert the Emperor. An imaginative mix of speculation and document, it ranges over sea and river journeys, slavery, cartography, alchemy, gifts, prostitution, the relationship between trade and missionary work, morality and war. Ricci mused on men "constantly thinking upon new techniques and dreaming of ways to increase the damage they cause."

He selected images, bartered knowledge and devised memory systems in an effort to make the Chinese understand Catholicism and European culture.

At first some thought that Mary must be the Christian God, and eunuchs complained that the crucifixion was an horrific and evil image. Spence truly appreciates hugely divergent cultures, revealing the magnitude and sometimes the comedy of the efforts of the one to understand the other, at a time when postal communications between the two could take seven years. □

The painter, the witch and the wardrobe

Richard Deveson

Bluebeard
KURT VONNEGUT *Cape* £10.95

AS EMPERORS GO, Kurt Vonnegut isn't exactly short of new clothes. And yet, for all his funny hats and clown's clodhoppers and exploding bow-ties, he can often leave an awful lot of naked, hairy arm and leg and midriff on view. His new novel, *Bluebeard*, is never unreadable, but for much of the time we almost feel as though he were very deliberately, very intelligently, very professionally trying to blarney us into taking the garish joke accessories for the whole suit.

The interesting point is that naked-emperorship is one of the themes of the book: the possible candidates for that honour being the Abstract Expressionist painters Rothko, Pollock and Co. The book is the autobiography of the Californian-Armenian Rabo Karabekian, once a painter himself as well as boozing companion, friend and patron to the New York School. Karabekian's own artistic reputation collapsed, literally, overnight when the paint of his colossal "Windsor Blue Number Seventeen", on display in the GEFFCo Building on Park Avenue, fell off the canvas in shreds resembling mouldy Rice Krispies. Two wives and many vicissitudes later, he exists in isolation in a huge house on Long Island, nursing priceless pictures by his dead friends and a padlocked secret of his own in the potato barn. His life is all set to fade away when a sorceress called Circe Berman walks into it and starts turning it upside down.

Circe Berman, who writes teenage bestsellers which sound like plagiarised Judy Blumes, takes a look at a Pollock and says: "All anybody could do with a picture like that is illustrate an advertisement for a hangover remedy or seasick pills." Art, like her novels, must communicate and — since the sorceress seems to succeed in reversing Karabekian's lonely sterility — this demolition of a reputation may seem to have some authorial endorsement going for it. But the position is more complicated. There is another enemy of abstractionism in the book: Dan Gregory, to whom Karabekian was once apprenticed, a purveyor of masterly kitsch which sounds like plagiarised Norman Rockwell. Gregory turns out to be a tyrant, a misogynist and a passionate admirer of Mussolini. Does this mean, then, that hyper-naturalism is really a form of authoritarianism and that abstract painting, as Karabekian says, is free, democratic and the expression of a "pure essence of human wonder"? Karabekian himself, after all, is a brilliant draughtsman who went abstract because naturalism came too easily. Yet the secret in the potato barn seems to undercut this second thesis too.

Admirers of Vonnegut may think it perverse to labour away at this inconclusive play of ideas when much of the point of reading him is precisely the funny-hat stuff: the wild characters, the cartwheels in the narrative, the arcana and trivia, the wheedling charm with its repetitions and exclamation

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marks and italics (he *loves* them, he *loves* them!). In this novel, sure enough, we get glimpses of the Turkish massacre of the Armenians, of a camouflage platoon in the Second World War, of Dan Gregory's grotesque studio décor and of Karabekian's erotic rites of passage with the beautiful Marilee. But the cartoon people and events would be funnier if they were in the service of ideas which were, themselves, more than a cartoon contrast between abstraction and kitsch — and, since Vonnegut doesn't neglect his old obsessions either, between human destructiveness *(shame, shame!)* and whatever it is that ought (but *how*, but *how?*) to replace it. Jokes aren't funny if all they are is jokes.

There's no denying Vonnegut's inventiveness. But it's almost as if that inventiveness is the problem he's really writing about. His own brilliant draughtsmanship allows him to be fantastical at the drop of his funny hat and yet this book, like Karabekian's paintings, ultimately lacks soul. Perhaps he should jettison his clothes altogether and give the soul a chance to shine through the naked flesh. □

Illusionists through the looking-glass

Paul Binding

Little Misunderstandings of No Importance
ANTONIO TABUCCHI trans. FRANCES FRENAYE
Chatto £10.95
The Council of Egypt
LEONARDO SCIASCIA trans. ADRIENNE FOULKE
Carcanet £10.95

ANTONIO TABUCCHI is, like Borges, obsessed by literary genres and their psychic importance: by the way their deployment can be a means of articulating aspects of the human condition.

The ironical and searching nature of his mind is well shown by the title of his first book of stories to be published here: **Little Misunderstandings of No Importance**. In it, a judge finds himself trying an old college mate, the whole case being written up by a journalist who was friendly with them both when young. This judge, however, embarked on his distinguished career by a sort of mistake. He "had planned his future, and signed up for Classics" but an administrative blunder placed him in the Law Faculty. And the defendant, Leo, had originally pursued his radical activities not through the commitment that the present charges against him would suggest, but to impress the girl they were all in love with. So, where does authenticity lie: in the present societised confrontation of the three men, or in the more indeterminate days of their youth, when what mattered most was Maddalena's hair, Maddalena's breasts and that favourite record of theirs, *Dusty Road?*

The problem of authenticity is everywhere in Tabucchi's remarkable stories: each one different but all with a unity of preoccupation and art. We have the prison guard on the convict ferry who, even on his last working day, cannot wholly shed the persona his job provided him. We have the ageing actor and actress re-making on the Riviera a rubbishy war film, which nevertheless expresses for them, as nothing else can, the emotional reality of their predicament — and, beyond that, of their largely consumed lives.

This last story, "Cinema", reveals very splendidly Tabucchi's absorption of art genres in furtherance of his pursuit of illusion and reality. It's a pursuit we've come to see as very Italian, from the theatre of Chiarelli, Pirandello and Betti onwards.

Leonardo Sciascia, now that Calvino is dead, is Italy's most probable Nobel Prizewinner, and **The Council of Egypt** (published in Italy in 1963) is among his very finest achievements. Again it manifests the Italian preoccupation with illusion, deception, error as not only mirrors to reality but as *parts* of reality, however we strive to define it. Set in late 19th-century Sicily (the events of which exist in uneasy parallel to those in revolutionary France) it is the story of a large-scale and audacious fraud, successful for a time and not only because of the cleverness of the perpetrator.

An ill-educated yet cunning and resourceful priest, originally from Malta, is hired as interpreter to an important Arab visitor to Palermo despite a very imperfect knowledge of Arabic. Seeing how he can take people in gives Don Giuseppe the idea for a forgery that will surely serve him well in his disappointed life. He "translates" to "Arab" manuscripts allegedly dating from the Arab occupation of Sicily. In the present political and social instability these are seen as important documents, seeming to vindicate the claims to territory and power of various nobles, claims increasingly under dispute from the government in Naples.

Of course, the validity of the manuscripts and of Don Giuseppe's versions of them is called into question, but the priest discovers in himself strange reservoirs of ability and acquits himself.

Like Tabucchi, Sciascia is a man of predominantly ironical vision. The one man who realises that Don Giuseppe is a trickster, a nobleman dedicated to reform, is the one man who undergoes public punishment — in an indolent, inextricably corrupt society. Indeed the last part of the novel is mostly taken up with an account of the tortures administered to Di Blasi and the preparations for his execution, an account given with appalling clarity, a shaft of Southern sunlight playing on very dark places indeed.

Yet the ironies are compound. Sciascia's novel is no simple presentation of an innocent, altruistic man punished and a guilty one going scot-free. In guilt is innocence, in suffering liberation, apotheosis. As the pain-racked Di Blasi thinks, seeing in his agony an image of the criminal-priest:

> He spelled out the fraud of life, after his own fashion . . . With zest . . . Not the fraud of life, the fraud that is in life . . . Not in life . . . Yes, yes *in* life.

The Council of Egypt is neither an historical novel in the normal sense, for it eschews detail in the interests of its beautifully economic art, nor is it a parable placed in a remote time and world. Period and setting are made palpable and, from them, the wrong-doing Don Giuseppe and the wronged Di Blasi call out, with a terrible power, to us in our perhaps not so very different context. □

The cost of commitment

Melissa Benn

Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of an American Radical
JANICE R. MACKINNON and
STEPHEN R. MACKINNON *Virago* £20

THIS BOOK makes you think about the *kinds* of connection that make a life worthwhile. Agnes Smedley died ill, lonely, poor, verging on the bitter — and, of all places, in England, the country she most despised politically.

She died without any significant relationship: most of her family were dead or she was estranged from them; she had no lover, only a string of ex-lovers and an even longer string of ex-political and personal friends, most turned enemies.

Yet, in another sense, Agnes Smedley's life was about the kind of connection that matters most of all. For, as this sober biography chronicles, she was part of the great struggles of her time: a contributor to and shaper of change, in the minor but nonetheless major ways that individuals can be. As a working-class woman who fought for two of the great anti-imperialist and nationalist causes of her time — the Indian struggle for independence from the British and the Chinese revolution — her life

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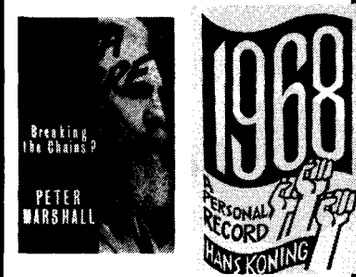

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UNWIN HYMAN

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story was "with" the forces of history.

From a poor, mining, wild-west childhood — immortalised in *Daughter of Earth* — Smedley became the political woman she did from experience of poverty. Fame, influence, the success of her journalism and writing: none of that ever affected her identification with the oppressed, with the rickshaw coolie who pulled foreigners through the streets of Shanghai in the 1930s, "silently running like a tired horse before me, his heavy breathing . . . his broad shoulders [beginning] to remind me of my father", with the char woman of the house in Wimbledon where Smedley stayed just before she died. These two had long talks, Smedley gave the char woman presents, but this was not a charitable impulse — Smedley always insisted that she was *part* of the downtrodden.

She gave her life, her body to her causes. In America she was imprisoned for her political work for the Indian cause. In Berlin she lived and fought with the community of exiled Indian nationalists. In China she marched with the Red Army, sat in caves talking poetry and morals with Mao Zedong. And, through it all, she preserved a political independence that was more than courageous. She supported the Communists in China — believing them to be the most democratic force in the country — without ever buckling to a Moscow or American communist party "line". (She hated the arrogance of New York intellectual communists.) For this stand, she was persecuted by all sides and, in the cold war climate of the late 1940s, virtually exiled.

For Smedley, as for Emma Goldman her contemporary, politics was life. Exemplary in one way, it meant, increasingly, a forswearing of other bonds. Her childhood made her distrustful of men. She saw how women were mens' sex objects, exhausted by the demands of sex and childbearing (she was active in the birth control campaign all her life). She saw how the double standard operated — but fell increasingly victim to it herself, her political reputation forever suffused with the moral disapproval of the puritanical, familial Americans. Her intense but, in her view, emotionally enslaved "marriage" to the exiled Indian radical nationalist Virendranath Chattopadhyaya shattered her confidence for a long time, turning her violently against the institution of marriage.

She never made a significant love connection again. Increasingly she chose the life of woman-who-could-be man. She intended to "take sex like a man", she told a friend, and for a while was promiscuous. She was loud talking, hard drinking, difficult — but everyone, hating her or loving her, remarked on her vitality. She relied on mainly women friends to support her financially but, towards the end of her life, quarelled even with them. The pattern of the political quarrels and ruptures suffused the personal. Ruptures everywhere.

You end by feeling that Smedley was punished for being a working-class woman who wanted the privileges (mobility, sex, pleasure) of a man, who wasn't delicate or careful enough with people's feelings but who wouldn't be hypocritical or compromising either. She made an impact on life — one sort of immortality — but at huge cost to her material, domestic and emotional comfort. Yet, if she chose that — which in part she did — wasn't it a reasonable price? □

The ass and the rat

Michèle Roberts

The Blue Donkey Fables
SUNITI NAMJOSHI *Women's Press* £3.95

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a pinkish-grey Rat who bumped up her meagre earnings as a poet and novelist by writing occasional reviews for leftish journals, like the *NS,* which paid their contributors at something like trade-union rates. The Rat acquired in this way a lot of review copies of books, which she mostly gave to her relatives as Christmas presents. What, she wondered, would her aunt Merle St Brioche make of *The Blue Donkey Fables?* On second thoughts, she decided to keep it for herself, so that she could read it a third time.

An earnest and naive feminist, she wanted to be able to praise a sister's work, but could Rats be sisters to Donkeys? She was not sure. She knew that works labelled feminist could be damned as *shrill* or praised as *not shrill,* so she was relieved to discover that *The Blue Donkey Fables* were characterised by a tone of quiet irony of a positively grande-dameish sort. On the other hand, the blurb promised that these fables were full of laughter-provoking, stinging wit, yet she did not find them particularly funny: she supposed that, being a pinkish-grey feminist Rat, she lacked a sense of humour. She could, however, feel wry smiles crossing her face from time to time as she read, and she hoped that this was a sufficiently positive response on which to base her review.

This was a strange little book, which demanded to be read on its own terms. The Rat struggled to elucidate them. She was reminded of mediaeval fables in which birds and animals often debated theology and politics, albeit in rhyme. She was reminded of the Sufi teaching parables concerning Nasrudim, in which the point of each story was never what you thought it was. She remembered Aesop, and the great chunks of the fables of La Fontaine which she had had to learn by heart in French lessons at school. Clearly, the author of *The Blue Donkey Fables* was mining a rich tradition, one that allowed her confidently to satirise it at the same time. European practices of speaking and behaving were being simultaneously accepted, deprecated and mocked. Here were stories deftly pointing out the absurd ways in which human beings insisted on categorising anything strange as Other and Worse, on preferring their own cosy visions to harsh reality, on trying to save and convert each other rather than leaving each other alone. Good relevant stuff, even if occasionally just a bit too cool and clever. The fables the Rat enjoyed most, it must be said, were those that left the Blue Donkey out and concentrated on humans — these had less queenly detachment and more compassion.

Best of all were the poems scattered through the text, since these often concerned stimulating discussions of sex, its earthy and tender moments as well as its banal ones. The Rat was reminded of Pope and Swift, of Stevie Smith, of the Elizabethans. The Blue Donkey's author was equally at home with sonnets and clerihews, though when she let go of traditional forms like these and allowed a well-controlled free verse to speak of lesbian love openly, there, the Rat thought, she achieved her best effects. Her Sappho mask suited her far better than her ass's head. □

No pity he's a whore

Boyd Tonkin

Seminar on Youth
ALDO BUSI trans. STUART HOOD *Carcanet* £12.95

OF THE MANY WAYS to *épater les bourgeois,* Aldo Busi's narrator chooses one of the more traditional. An angry young man from a peasant family in northern Italy, he sets up as semi-professional rough trade in the glossy and becalmed Paris of the Pompidou era. As the cool, curious Barbino shuttles between *salon* and cottage, a sense of *déjà lu* prevails.

Seminar on Youth chronicles the splendours and miseries of a harlot high and low. With bartered sex as the key that opens the secrets of Parisian wealth and *chic,* the kinship with Balzac or Zola bridges gaps of gender and epoch. Like them, Busi makes prostitution the exemplary career for a post-political age of private accumulation.

These days, any picaresque tale of gay life set in the recent past will be greeted as some sort of wistful retrospect. Busi's first novel appeared in Italy in 1984, which makes the presumption of nostalgia less persuasive. More to the point, this reaction ignores the drift of all sexual Utopias, whatever their preference, towards settings remote in time or place.

Like Sade's châteaux, Busi's Left Bank becomes a world elsewhere. Its Uptopianism lies not in any claim to perfection, but in the sheer single-mindedness of its pursuits. It "promotes" homosexual prostitution in roughly the same way that *Moby Dick* promotes the deep-sea whaling industry. Though often squalid, this world is seldom messy. Busi has learnt from Jean Genet a certain art of blasphemy and, in his hands, Barbino's whoredom turns into an almost monkish vocation.

When he buys some porn at the Gare du Nord, Suzanne — one of the trio of well-bred fag-hags Barbino befriends — remarks: "Since May '68 that's all anyone reads." Amid the ruins of revolution, he stalks his punters like a bedroom terrorist: "People who are all of one piece make me feel slightly disgusted and yet they excite me sexually." A retired colonel, an ageing artist, a Catholic intellectual: Barbino's longer-term lovers find themselves deconstructed by this blank mockery. It forms part of a vendetta whose climax would be "to catch a dose of syphilis and infect the world". In graphic detail, Barbino manages the first half of this ambition; the second is a little more

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elusive.

A good existential anti-hero, he spurns affection and fulfilment, aspiring to become a "cage within a cage". Being an ambulant vacuum proves hard work. Suzanne, Arlette and Geneviève conspire — so he fears — to domesticate the Martian. In Barbino's mental world, femaleness comes to mean dependence, loss of self, the quicksands of obligation. After a heterosexual encounter, he wonders whether "having come to orgasm with a woman, I too have become a little more *human*". His passionless couplings fuse into a strangely abstract quest for non-attachment, a kind of priapic Buddhism.

A lush stylist, full of flourish and nuance, Busi disgressively explores his own version of philosophy in the boudoir. Though absent in the lives and on the lips of his characters, the anarchic rage that dropped from sight after 1968 nonetheless drives Barbino's mission to puncture the watertight selfhood of his tricks. The whore turns out to be not the despised Other of the priest or the executive, but their *doppelgänger*. Gazing at his cold smirk of cunning and greed, they look, as in a mirror, at themselves. □

Two poems by John Gurney

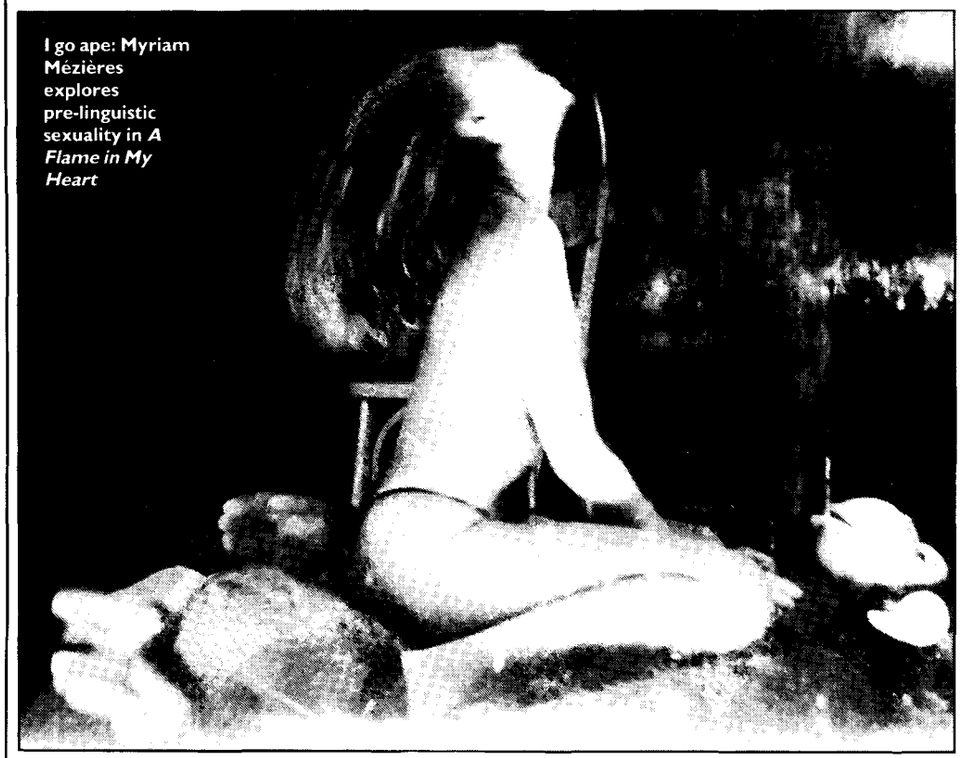
The Patient

How beautiful it was to feel that I
was abnegating anguish for a while,
a week perhaps, or two, as eagerly
I waited for the doctors with a smile
to switch on their electrics. All was clean:
the carpet rich and crimson on the floor.
Bright music gleamed from tapes, as, thin and
lean,
I strode towards the aluminium door
and winked towards the nurses. For at last
the time had come for entry. I was first
to climb, like an ascetic in a fast
the shining mobile table with a thirst
that lusted for the swab, the needle's kiss,
the sudden, quick descent to nothingness.

After ECT

Awakening was a bliss, and for a time
I scarcely recollected where I was.
The blacknesses had vanished. Pure, sublime,
transparent as an angel, clear as glass,
I lay upon the trolley, as the nurse
was loosening my strappings. Silently
a brightness shone about me, for life's curse
apparently had vanished. Easily
I lifted from the sheet, for all was calm,
all former worlds forgotten. In the light
I smiled, with neither terror, nor alarm.
Bewildered by the absence of the night
I asked them who I was, and whence I came:
my local occupation, and my name.

ARTS



I go ape: Myriam Mézières explores pre-linguistic sexuality in *A Flame in My Heart*

Alain who will be 71 . . .

For male viewers at least, ART as in art movie has often been an acronym for angst, revolution and titillation. **JUDITH WILLIAMSON** *considers new variants on the genre*

A LOT OF people see Art Movies as simply all the films that are left if you take away Hollywood and other mainstream products, a sort of pure cinema unhampered by the constraints of popular genre structures. Yet the Art Movie is itself a genre; one whose components are often as readily identifiable as those of the more obviously generic Western or Thriller.

The two obligatory themes in the thinking person's Art Movie are politics and sex, usually in some sort of clever combination. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (and this is not intended to belittle Resnais' and Duras' film) is in some respects a prototype: the upfront presentation of a sexual affair against a backdrop of key political events is a formula which, whether exploratory and exciting or banal and coy, has appeared over and over again in Art House hits.

Sexual mores and political struggle have been the main concerns of the so-called '60s generation and it is hardly surprising that they should be at the heart of "alternative", "intelligent" cinema (for example, almost all of Godard's work). But it is not so much the themes themselves as their patterns of interweaving which characterise a very particular kind of work.

In the world of books, John Berger's *G* is a perfect example: there is a lot of sex with a lot of women and enough history and "politics" for left-wing intellectuals to feel it's significant. This mixture is what in chemical terms is called a suspension rather than a solution.

It is no coincidence that Berger has a history of film collaboration with Alain Tanner. Tanner's films have always managed to locate sex in women and politics in men. A typical scenario (from his *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*): right-on, not specially attractive Thinking Man angst-ridden about the future of socialism meets very, very cute young blonde check-out attendant in the supermarket and they get it together. There is a clear dimension to this which is simply the authors' own fantasies: middle-aged socialist intellectuals meet sexy chicks.

But nowadays, smart male directors have figured that it merely exposes your sexism if you try and make this sort of film on your own as a man: Godard, for example, has shared script credits with his partner, Anne-Marie Miéville, on his more recent films — which has probably helped prevent them being torn apart by feminists. And now Tanner emerges with a new film, **Flame in my Heart** (Cannon Piccadilly, 18), whose script is co-credited to Myriam Mézières — also the leading player.

Critic Raymond Durgnat falls for this device,

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calling the film "androgynous, in the sense of being a collaboration between members of the opposite sex". But what is so depressing about the film is precisely the boring and predictable way it is about as un-androgynous as it could be, allocating — as always — sex to Woman (Mézières is very keen on being Woman) and politics to Man. Tanner seems eager in this film to let us know that he knows all about cunnilingus but even doling out *oral* sex to women and politics to men isn't particularly interesting. All that "happens" in the film is that Mézières has a lot of sex with a working-class Arab lover, leaves him, picks up a — yes, you've guessed it — middle-class socialist intellectual on the métro, has a lot of sex with him, and flips out when he goes away, i.e. stops brushing her hair, eats a lot and masturbates in front of the TV.

It's easy to laugh at the whole thing, as with any work which lacks the wit to recognise its own cliché. But it isn't, in a way, as stupid as it sounds, or rather, it isn't a silly film so much as a bad film. Intellectually it latches on to a complex set of contemporary ideas about speech and sexuality, in which signification is seen as male and femininity is identified with pre-linguistic physicality. The script is full of stuff about Woman being the "interior" and the intellectual writes her long letters about her "dumb mouth" (geddit?). In practice what this means is that He reads newspapers and She has orgasms. Finally she leaves him, in Cairo, for no reason, and smiles at a little Egyptian girl. Who knows the secret of the black magic box? That's about how profound this investigation of "femininity" is.

For some viewers, profundity, or "Art Movie"-ness is achieved in a film merely by its having subtitles. **The Unbearable Lightness of Being** (Cannon Fulham Rd, Empire Leicester Sq, 18), directed by Philip Kaufman, is in fact an *American* Art Movie, but with the requisite foreignness produced not only by its setting (an adaptation of Kundera's novel, it takes place in Czechoslovakia and Switzerland around '68) but by the intriguing phenomenon of a non-Czech cast all speaking English with assumed Czech accents. Daniel Day Lewis plays Tomas, the young, brilliant doctor and inveterate womaniser whom we follow through the revolutionary years in Prague in his relationships with his liberated artist lover Sabina (Lena Olin) and the country girl who becomes his wife, Tereza (Juliette Binoche).

The film's craving for authenticity goes beyond the bizarre "Czech" accents of Day Lewis and co.: there is some virtuoso mingling of newsreel with the film's own footage to show Tomas and Tereza appearing in "historical" shots of Prague '68. Here, while the political history is still a backdrop to the "lovers' story" (as the film is subtitled) it is not a removable backdrop: the movements of the central figures in the erotic triangle are determined as much by political as by emotional events. The atmosphere of fear when Tomas and Tereza return to Russian-occupied Prague is vividly invoked (and may endear the film to US audiences) though the idyllic rustic life they finally create is almost impossibly romantic.

The film's picaresque quality — shifting locations as Tomas, like a Czech Tom Jones, follows his lovers across a historical landscape — in part expresses its philosophy, or rather, the philosophy of the book: Tomas comments that life allows no opportunity for rehearsals and he plunges into its many different experiences. Yet Day Lewis, who makes a face throughout which is like the male equivalent of Meryl Streep's (i.e. rigidly enigmatic), doesn't bring the sense either of great depth or great exuberance to the role.

But another spin-off effect of the episodic narrative is that it offers us a range of choices between beautifully Art Movie mises-en-scène. And this is where the expectations of the genre are really a liability. Besides being compellingly beautiful, Juliette Binoche acts admirably, but there is also a level on which one really gets into her adorable '60s skirts and ankle socks, cunningly contrasted with the fresh, flowery frocks that appear out of nowhere when they go to the country. Then there is the sophisticated fondue scene in Geneva to roll around the tongue and compare with the soup and beer on the wooden table on the farm and so on. Nice *stuff* is becoming an important component of contemporary Art Movies: and whatever other deprivations this US film shows us in pre-and post-invasion Prague, it always manages to find, among the sex and politics, enough of that stuff to satisfy an audience familiar with the Next Catalogue. □

PHOTOGRAPHY

Energy displayed as concentration on the face of a girl with a hula-hoop

Tale of two nations

Liz Heron

In Flagrante
CHRIS KILLIP *V & A until 29 May/Secker* £20 & £9.95

IN A RECENT radio interview, Chris Killip said he chose to work only in black and white because colour distracts too much from the content of the image. This decision sets him firmly apart from many of his contemporaries, for whom that classic rejection of colour in favour of monochrome's superior seriousness no longer holds.

It's impossible to imagine Killip not working in black and white. Its tonal range and depth seem most appropriate to the intimations of time (though not timelessness) in his photographs. Colour has too much forced immediacy — though it's precisely this that's being put to good use in some cases. Like Anna Fox's shots of office workers, Paul Reas' photographs of supermarkets and shopping malls (currently at the Photographer's Gallery) suggest that, without colour, we can't grasp the programmed syntax of consumerism, suburbanism and aspiration — those features that publicly mark off one of the two nations from the other.

Fox and Reas aren't in the business of making beautiful pictures; it's the ugliness or constricting uniformity of their environments that are pulled into view along with the flimsy nature of *choice* that's being tendered there. They work in metaphors. So too does Killip, but he fashions a poetic vocabulary for the inexpressable loss and dislocation that's experienced by the other of those two nations.

The photographs in *In Flagrante* were made over the last 12 years, almost all in the de-

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industrialised North East. Together they powerfully transmit the photographer's own sorrow and anger: in every way they add up to a personal vision. The subjective truth of this is acknowledged in a note that prefaces the pictures: ". . .this is a subjective book about my time in England. . . the photographs can tell you more about me than about what they describe. . ."

This is a stance of avowed romanticism in its most political sense, and if Killip's aesthetic recalls earlier romantic traditions of landscape and documentary realism, in fusing those elements to a heightened degree he creates a particularly intense and more radical series of statements than these traditions imply. There are certainly landscapes, but even in coastal scenes, where the turbulent poetry of light and sky acquires epic proportions, Killip offers no claim, no reassurance, that landscape *endures*. Its deformations, its scarred neglect, speak of capitalism's exploitive carelessness, as well as atmospherically echoing the blighted lives of those who inhabit it.

Beauty and expansive space stand here as lost potentials for freedom, and one can read these images as indictments of history extending back beyond the present phase of de-industrialisation. In the glistening cobblestones of an empty backstreet that slopes down to the towering hull of a ship called *Tyne Pride*; in the geometry of snow-covered roofs and a roadway where figures move in solitary silhouette and a scrawled slogan urges Don't Vote Prepare for Revolution; in a panorama that shows horses grazing on waste ground behind advertising billboards: a history of thwarted attachments to place, the enforced nomadism or death of communities surplus to requirements is elegiacally evoked. The travelling people who appear in some pictures represent the utmost margins of that process.

Waste is everywhere: in tips and dumps and bonfires, demolition and abandoned sites. Dogs and horses proliferate, less as pets than as animals with a function, in a pre-industrial sense, like the ponies that pull the carts loaded with sea coal harvested from the beach. There are many children and the tenderness bestowed on them by adults is observed quite unsentimentally. There's one picture of a child that would be unremarkable were it not for its context: a boy cupping a frog in his hands, intent and curious, sublimely aware of his own omnipotence.

Killip's lens is neither patronising nor pitying. Though the people in what he calls his "fiction about metaphor" have been rendered disposable by the fluctuations of power elsewhere, their lives have their own energy. It pushes out towards the edges of the frame: energy blocked or trapped or diverted into violence, gathered into bowed humiliation; energy displayed as hardened anger on the face of a man standing in a doorway while police carrying riot shields occupy the street outside, displayed as concentration on the face of a girl with a hula-hoop; energy expended for survival. What's most tragic about these photographs is their sheer dynamism — of human lives held in check, stopped up, diminished by their shrunken possibilities.

They are scrupulously careful and respectful pictures. Looking at them is like watching pieces of a moving image — with the sound turned off. They're all the more painfully eloquent for that acute silence, for their acknowledgment of what's ineffable. □

A.R. Kane: the revival of radiance

POP

Lessness

Simon Reynolds

IT'S IN THE nature of my job to be buttonholed by dodgy new combos and by amateur pundits with a bone to pick, so I've lost count of the number of times I've heard this familiar, beleaguered *cri de coeur*: "What happened to songs, eh? When did you last hear a good song?"

It wouldn't be so bad if what they meant was the generous depths and twists of a Van Morrison or Tim Buckley: the song as something you can live inside. Or the disorientating complexity of **Throwing Muses** (check their brilliant new LP, *House Tornado* on 4AD): the song as a space in which contradications are splayed, not harmonically resolved. But what these types invariably mean by "song" is *tune* — something for the milkman to whistle, something to sing in the bath. And, invariably, this hankering for classic pop simplicity is bound to one of a number of reactionary visions of "perfect pop", all dependent on a lost moment in the past. So we get the sub-Motown/Stax jubilation of the nouveau soul bands, or the pallid replication of The Velvet Underground or Byrds' coy side (most of the indie scene), and What Pop Is All About becomes What Pop Ever Shall Be. The latest regressive fixation is the power pop revival, trailblazed by those chartbusters **The Primitives**, with groups like Voice of The Beehive and Transvision Vamp not far behind, I fear.

The Primitives' prime influences are Blondie (a Pop Art inflected, self-consciously "shallow" grasp of glamour, plus lovey-dovey peroxide vox) and The Buzzcocks (the most political but also most jejeune and lovelorn of the punk groups). Both wonderful bands, in their day, but (and this applies especially to Blondie) to hark back to them is to pay homage to what is itself a homage (to the 1960s). There's no future here: "innocence" can't be returned to *once* without becoming cloyed with the heavy odour of camp knowingness, let along twice.

Late '70s power pop was where the values of pop symmetry (verse/chorus/verse/chorus/middle eight, etc) met up with the most diminished reading of punk (as a return to basics, two-minute songs, urgency, no techno-flash). All the spirit of punk was jettisoned, leaving only a confining set of musical values — economy, tightness, underproduction. These post-punk inhibitions have persisted, and the parsimonious or even anorexic attitude to sound they've inculcated has come to fit horribly well with the creed of the song as the be-all and end-all of Pop.

British rock is still overwhelmingly trammelled by the post-punk tenet: less is more. Throughout 1987, though, certain bands began to wake up to the realisation that less is actually *less*. The punk charter is being gradually overhauled by a new set of values based around overload, disproportion, over-emphasis, surfeit, gross-out, even turgidity. Take the new album *Hairway to Steven* (Blast First) by the Texan group **Butthole Surfers**. They have been hailed, by the farsighted, as the most *masturbatory* rock group of the day, rivalled only

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by Prince's orgiastic play with his own sound. The Buttholes' penchant is for using disorientating effects on the voice and the guitar, and for wreaking havoc with the way rock sound is usually ordered in the mix. Their influences (Hendrix, Hawkwind, Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Sex Pistols) and preoccupations (junk TV, serial murder, hardcore gay porn, deranged zealot preachers, intensive surgery, hallucinogenics) share a single quality — utter extremity.

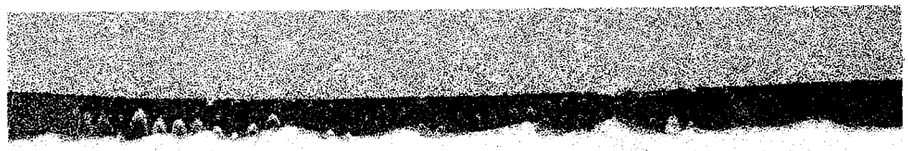
If all this seems to bode the dread bombast and ostentation of '70s progressive rock, think again. Butthole Surfers combine the scope and reach of acid rock with the primitivism of punk. There are two aspects here. First, the Buttholes are mostly unexceptional musicians. The density and scale of their music is not the result of sophistication but of layering strand after strand of minimalism. There's no sense of florid signature as with musos like Page or Clapton, where music is always a protection of the self's mastery; rather the Buttholes as individuals are blotted out by the devastation and vastness they whip up.

Second, though they retain some of the cosmic feel of psychedelia, it's charged up with the puerility and perversity of punk: this is a kind of mystical nihilism. Unlike hippy-rock, Butthole Surfers don't offer up pseudo-profundities, but are profoundly, albeit often humorously, baffled by the awe-fulness of what goes on. So musical excess is combined with reductionism: they're fascinated with what Bataille called "the fall", when lofty human consciousness thinks itself through to the realisation that we are just beasts, collections of plasma and tissue, or that we are not the shapers of our own destiny, that we are born victims, by definition.

The only group in the UK to rival the Buttholes' gratuitousness with sound are **A.R. Kane**. Using guitars, effects and the studio-as-instrument, A.R. Kane are creating a new music at the outer limits of rock, dub and free jazz. This is "noise", in the sense that's it's impossible to read in terms of riffs or chords. These constituent particles of rock are overdriven through distortion and sustain, until they explode in mini-supernovae whose lustrousness seems out of all proportion to the actual physical events that triggered them. The result is a shapeless radiance (surely the result of hundreds of overdubs) that seems to stretch into eternity.

On their new EP "Up Home!" (Rough Trade), there are songs, exquisite melodies, as it happens, but what you listen for are the myriad harmonic refractions that soar, wilt and converge in their nebula of sound. There's an enigmatic spaciousness on "Up Home!" I've not encountered since The Cocteau Twins' "Head Over Heels" and Miles Davis' "Bitches Brew", and it's no surprise to hear that A.R. Kane have been working with avant-jazz titan Sun Ra.

A forthcoming LP *1969* makes a nod to their inspiration — that lost moment of acid-rock and jazz-fusion expansionism. But where The Primitives' homage to 1978 petrifies an already fixed, definitive vision of pop perfection, A.R. Kane and the Buttholes more literally *revive*; they are breathing new life into a set of possibilities previously gestured at but far from fully explored. The stage is set for the contest between the new Power Pop with its imperatives of economy and rudiment, and the new Acid Rock with its goals of TOOMUCHandFAROUT. □



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Saturday 11 June	Manchester Cathedral
Sunday 12 June	St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh
Monday 13 June	Paisley Abbey
Tuesday 14 June	Durham Cathedral
Wednesday 15 June	Blackburn Cathedral
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TELEVISION

A new-born baby cry

W. Stephen Gilbert

"NO CRITIC," declares Barbara Taylor Bradford, "has ever given one person one moment of pleasure." Well excuse *me*, Mrs B! As it happens, I have never read *A Woman of Substance* or any of your other mega-selling volumes of glop; nor did I watch the teleminiseries of the only title of yours that non-fans remember. In fact, the only encounter with your philosophy I have endured is the half-hour exploring the phenomenon of your unquestionable success at shifting large numbers of books in the Channel Four series **Busting the Block Or The Art of Pleasing People.** And all that gave me was a pain.

Barbard Taylor Bradford is the very embodiment of Suburbia Rampant, an heraldic figure much more indicative of the age than is Utopia Dormant. She fled Armley at the earliest opportunity but it was with an exorcism of this dour Leeds quarter that she made her major bid for that foolish, fond readership which rewards blatant romancers by bestowing a fierce brand-loyalty and she has never, in any sense, looked back. Now she queens it on the Upper East Side, receiving the more ostentatiously wealthy Manhattanites in — as she makes sure all her guests know — Zandra Rhodes slashed to the small of the back.

Mrs Bradford — her American husband "masterminds the merchandising" — has that iron certainty that, three generations ago, was a quality known only to the ruling class. The old order has largely been swept aside now and the aristocracy of new money has acquired the ruling if not the class. Casting off every last vestige of proletarian impedimenta, Mrs Bradford has metamorphosed into her own heroine: her own image is now marketed quite as assiduously as are her books.

Jeffrey Milland's film didn't display much liking or respect for Mrs Bradford. The editing had her begin with, "I know what makes people tick," and end with, "I happen to like myself as a person." Not being a regular on the box, she perhaps didn't anticipate how unsympathetic such prating can sound. But nothing she said betweentimes suggested that Mrs Bradford is in possession of any other than the most conventional mind. It was hard to resist picturing her in a little cocktail dress, officiating at a barbecue in Byfleet. You can put the girl in Manhattan, but you can't put Manhattan in the girl.

But it is the very fervour with which her paltry bromides are uttered that must strike a chord in her suburban readership. She hasn't got the beginnings of a clue what makes people tick but she certainly does know what tickles people. By 1990, it's calculated, she should have sold in the UK alone somewhere around 12 million copies of her books. It does rather set the teeth on edge.

Even more phoney was the sight of Joan Regan in a bolero and strapless evening gown delivering, with that dimpled smile and slightly hoarse but caressing voice, a ditty of deathless prose entitled "Happy Anniversary". As her shapely, gloved hand stretched out in a curvaceous gesture to offer the lyric to the world, a man's hand swept into frame to deliver her a champagne glass of entirely flat, clear liquid. They don't do zhush like that on television any more.

This peerless nonsense from a 1960s variety show was shown again in a new anthology series of cheap nostalgia from Thames, this one witlessly entitled **In On the Act**. Recycling one of his scripts from *Looks Familiar*, Denis Norden is the host, but the budget is much lower than for his previous vehicle and there is only one greying guest instead of three. Here it was the profoundly unfunny Bernie Winters, who at least justified his appearance by supplying the enticing nugget that the gentleman's extremity glimpsed in the Regan clip belonged to the ineffable Lionel Blair. Earlier we had seen a clip of the sylph-like Lionel prancing around an ATV studio and revealing four beehived showgirls lurking under dustsheets. The whole number was like something slightly surreal from *The Avengers*.

Other clips were just as fascinating. Norden reminded us how utterly wholesome was that trio of warbling Irishmen, the Bachelors, but seeing them again one realised with a shock how much more camp they seem now than they did then. If they can still stand and carry off the dramatic pauses, they could have a *huge* come-back. Then there were Pete 'n' Dud, making an unusual raid on *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*. Far from wholesome, their routine must have had old Lew Grade phoning the company's OB scanner on the night, to point out that this was a family show. Bernie Winters, prodded by Norden who claimed he was there on the occasion, had no recollection of the Cook and Moore act, but then it couldn't have been his brand of lark — too many ideas, too cerebral, too original.

A sample of Winters' own work with brother Mike showed how derivative his *schtick* was, even down to the Norman Wisdom cap. What Norden refrained from exploring was the one aspect of Winters' career that offers the hint of any interest: why did he split with his brother and where is the latter now? There has to be an untold story there, but *In On the Act* is not about true stories, it's about empty reassurance. Barbara Taylor Bradford would have *loved* it. □

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THEATRE

War and peace

Victoria Radin

The Mahabharata
ANON adapt. JEAN-CLAUDE CARRIÈRE *Old Museum of Transport, Glasgow until 17 May*

"ONE LOOK AT the average audience gives us the irresistable urge to assault it — to shoot first and ask questions later," Peter Brook wrote in *The Empty Space*.

Twenty years on, his killer instinct survives in the back-breaking seats in the Bouffes du Nord, in the queues for its unreserved seats that form nightly even in snow and ice, and in (whatever the apparent causes), the choice of Glasgow as the site of the sole British appearance of *The Mahabharata* — a decision which (*pace* the Garden Festival) must be doing more for British Airways than privatisation.

Yet like all philosophers and psychoanalysts — and he has much of both — Brook knows there are unpredictable benefits to be had from assault. For me, part of *The Mahabharata* was the experience of Glasgow, with its population of vivid young people, hardier and more alive than the dull, chic emptiness of Londoners.

Brook is above all a seeker. Like all the finest artist-seekers (and not withstanding his press cuttings file which an assistant in his office told me seemed longer than the 15 volumes of the printed *Mahabharata*) his attitude to the public which sees his results is fundamentally take-it-or-leave-it. The search, in our post-Auschwitz, nuclear age, cannot be found in what he calls the "innessential degenerate" Christianity of the West. "We do not know how to celebrate because we do not know what to celebrate," he wrote before he founded his International Centre for Theatre Creation in Paris: where one of his first productions, *The Ik*, a study of an African tribe depraved by colonisation, seemed to suggest that his pessimism was leading to a cul-de-sac.

The *Mahabharata* may be seen as a kind of reconciliation. Its motor, and over one third of its matter, is devoted to a great war between the two ruling clans of the world and a search for the "ultimate weapon" that will destroy them — and Brook and his author Jean-Claude Carrière, at least in the early days of the piece, now nearly three years old, were not chary of pointing out the contemporary parallels. On the other hand, when the ultimate weapon arrives — as, apparently, it must — it is overcome by sheer force of mind: humanity, with all its strengths and weaknesses, survives. The last scene of the piece shows the formerly inimical dead in paradise, celebrating, if nothing else, their common humanity. The scene is entitled "The Last Illusion" but the whole play is an object-lesson in the illusoriness of what we call reality.

One of the ways Brook, and especially Carrière, achieves this is by story-telling: and here the Brookian wanderings in North Africa, the yowls at Persepolis, the gathering of a widely multi-cultural core company and, especially, its work with improvisation has most palpably borne fruit. The

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play begins when a young boy (Vietnamese in the Paris production I saw; British Asian in Glasgow) runs forward on the tons of ochre-coloured mud that form the basis of Chloë Obolensky's magnificent set, to a small pool where he bathes his face. An old man, the story-teller, appears, saying that he has written a poem which is the story of the boy's race. He needs someone to write it down for him, a post soon filled by the appearance of the elephant-god Ganesha.

The story eventually takes over; but without ever losing sight of the narrator or the boy, whose presence not only provides a means of stripping us of our raggedy sophistication but proof, at the darkest moments of war, that there is a future. The narration fast-forwards, reverses, undulates inside itself: the story-teller advises his characters, is criticised by them; and even, when things grind to a halt, enters the tale to sire the sons that are the basis for his tale of opposing cousins. Like the greatest literature, this *Mahabharata* is the tale of the artist's creation of his work as well as its story; and it has the instinctive logic of a dream.

There are moments when its intentionally bare, non-literary prose (translated by Brook into English from Carrière's French) begins to limp, when the effort of "translating the untranslatable" (Brook's definition of theatre) sags. The sags, more of them, are there on the page; but the work is lifted by the acting. One of the themes — a favourite with Brook — is commitment and action, whatever one's qualms or ambivalences: which most of the actors, with their extraordinary differences, do not so much demonstrate as embody. The women performers, all of non-European backgrounds, have en elemental stage presence which doesn't prohibit a grace in the love-making moments which are characterised for both sexes by a shy joy. All the characters harbour qualities opposing their central nature, a duality which is one of the givens of the play. As the brutalised Draupodi, the Indian Mallika Sarabhai, a dancer and teacher, has a tranquil dignity that never allows you to question how five husbands can be more united because of their one wife; but it is *her* blood-lust that finally pulls everyone to war. Mireille Maalouf (Lebanese) changes before our eyes from a bejewelled young girl into a restrained princess voluntarily covering her eyes forever when she learns her groom is blind; and Ryszard Cieslak (Polish) has an uncanny vulnerability as a man whose blindness (like that of Oedipus or Gloucester) allows him at times to see more clearly, but who passes on a form of mental blindness to his sons. Bruce Meyers (British), as the perhaps-God Krishna, endows the role with a muscular humour that allows one to accept that a being possessed of superhuman powers and wisdom can still take sides as he pleases and even cheat to win.

The nub of Krishna's lesson — and, like the original, the play *is* a lesson — is the concept of dharma, or the personal harmony of every individual which, when breached, leads to wider disorder. Not quite good *v* evil, for it permits selfishness, but what it assumes is our *emotionally* — not morally — dualistic nature; and what it necessitates is conflict. What we constantly see in *The Mahabharata* is each person, like the blindfolded bride, taking action and accepting the consequences of those actions as well as the continuing need for change. The audience is forced to keep pace with their reasoning, providing its own explanations in the way a child might do. Brook has written of the necessity of drama literally to etch an engraving on the spectator. Despite longeurs, despite my moments of rage at the engulfing smoke, incense, fires and muddy splashes, and despite the extreme skepticism of my nature, I find that this performance has burnt into my life. □

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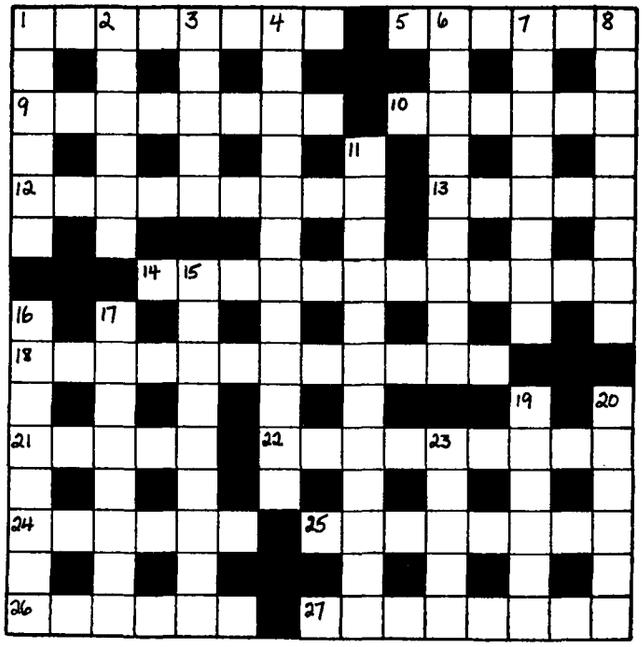

Name_____

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ACROSS

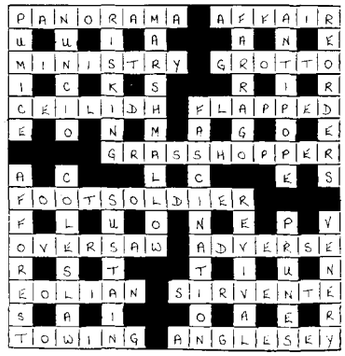
1. Composition which makes one calm about publicity (8)
5. Second in the awards for songs (6)
9. Have relationships with each other, like a virgin embracing a queen (8)
10. Approach welcome to French girl without clothes on (6)
12. Final fruit (9)
13. Something in the house which is made from fine well-seasoned timber (5)
14. Plucky players appear where there are lots of animals (4,8)
18. Completing against the lot before marriage (12)
21. Sound historian (5)
22. Needs adapting to hold a suitable one when high and low are closest (9)
24. A tax on credit in something men wear (6)
25. Acted when it was dark inside and was thus incapacitated (8)
26. Married after the woman is produced for inspection (6)
27. Takes apart cryptic clues set by Wilson (8)

DOWN

1. Spare devil found in place of gods? (6)
2. Evaluating a hand (6)
3. If she goes with a beginner she is typical (5)
4. There is good climbing on an island in a modest interpretation (12)
6. If there were no occasion this number would be observed (9)
7. Desire to give a greeting in the air? (8)
8. Kind of fruit which would not do for Wimbledon (8)
11. Give to the regions a respectable broadcast serial (12)
15. A silent tear being shed to indicate what is to come (9)
16. Pick case to pieces to discover cold things (8)
17. If there were no sound the cruel would appear foolish (8)
19. State further about senility being backward and confused (6)
20. Soft words, as on a date (6)
23. Draw in an extra illustration (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1591



Prizewinners to 1591

A. Kirkby (Exeter, Devon)
Barbara Cooper
(Auchterarder, Perthshire)
W. Nicholas Evans
(Mountain Ash, Mid-Glam.)

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Fair party

John Eatwell, Office of Leader of the Opposition, House of Commons, London SW1
Stephen Howe's article on the Labour Party's Policy Review (*NS* 15 April) contains a fine example of the use of selective quotation as political smear — a smear enhanced by the use of the same selective quote on your cover.

Mr Howe quotes me (correctly) as saying that "Equality is an unpopular issue" and, echoing *1066 and All That,* "Equality is a Bad Thing". The reader might be forgiven for thinking that I was urging the Review Group to trim its sails to an anti-egalitarian wind.

The reader would not know, because Mr Howe chose carefully not to tell him or her, that I went on to emphasise that "Labour is committed to the principle of equality . . . Labour is committed to an attack on poverty . . . Labour is committed to sexual and radical equality", and concluded "we must be the Party of fairness". The Labour Party is putting the issue of equality back where it belongs — at the centre of the political agenda.

New Stateswoman

Mrs Gwendy Peck, Lewes, E. Sussex
I have had the *New Statesman* each week since just after the last war and am so delighted to read Sarah Benton's article on the early days of the *New Statesman* which at last confirms my own view of the paper (*NS* 15 April).

I have always been very conscious of its very male ambience and have often felt a keen desire to give many of the contributors a smart kick in the pants, though there was always some difficulty in picking out the exact reason for my fury. I once wrote a letter to the Editor, but my husband (who called himself a feminist) persuaded me not to send it, saying I was getting phobic about women's rights etc. I dare say the letter would not have been published anyway.

I suppose the whole smell of the paper — its patronising, arrogant know-all atmosphere — is mainly due to the editor. I, however, feebly continue to read it as it's the only left-wing magazine available.

I wonder what proportion of your readers is female. I also wonder if you know or care. You might even increase your circulation if you take account of over half the population.

Infighting

B. A. Miller, Ilford, Essex
Sean Hughes MP (Letters 15 April) appears to be suggesting that a "Labour" Party opposition should be supported without regard to the fact that many of its leading members spend more time criticising colleagues who support democratically decided socialist policies than actively promoting those same policies themselves.

In the run-up to the last election John Cunningham and Roy Hattersley (to name but two) not only failed to argue socialist policies they made it blatantly clear that they did not, and would not, support party policies.

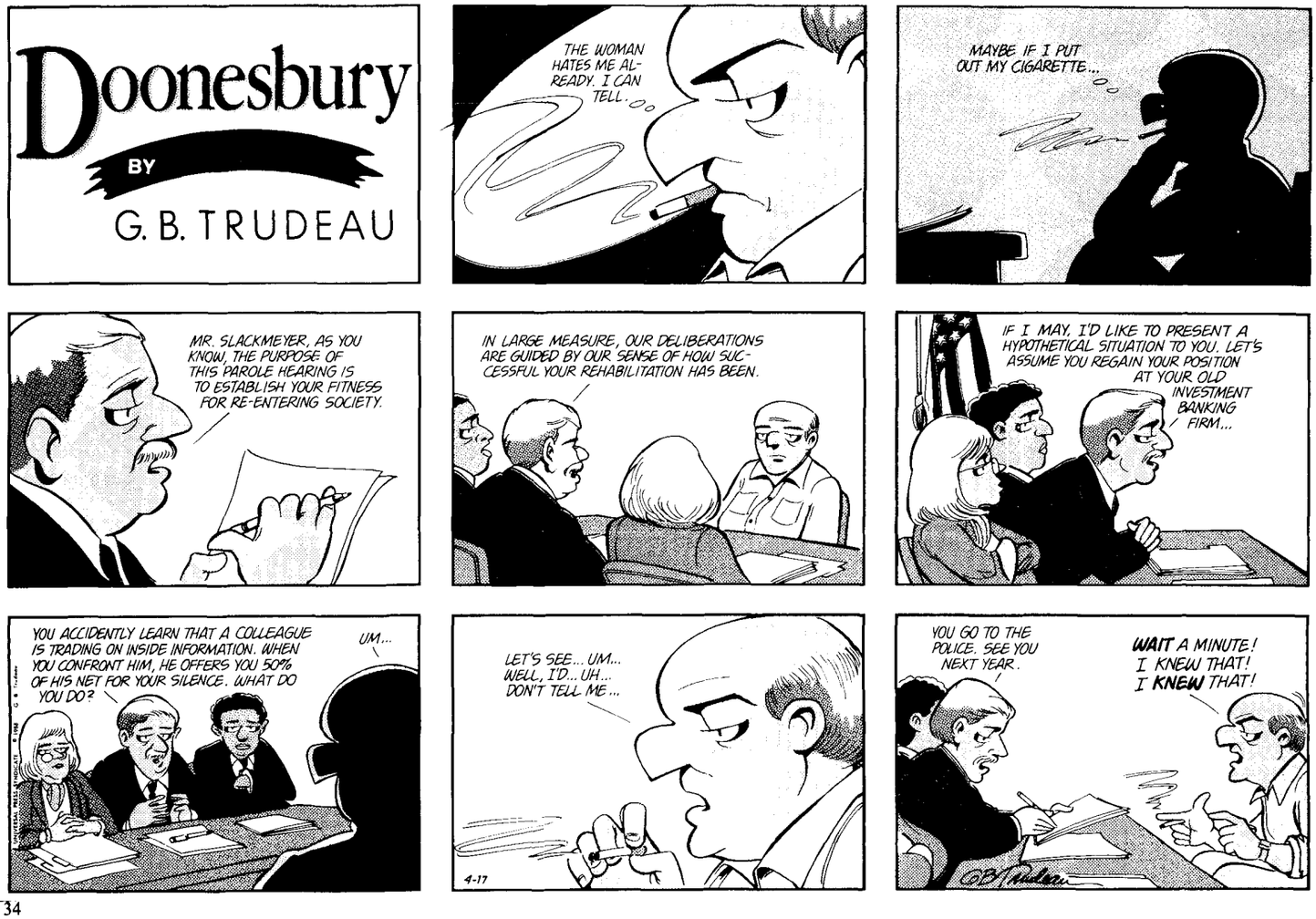
If the Labour leadership refuses "to listen" to conference and act on socialist policies, then at present there appears to be no obvious viable alternative to Thatcher. Sean Hughes, and others like him, are doing their party a great disservice in complying with the image of disunity promoted by the right wing press and failing to recognise the consequences.

The challenge for the leadership appears to be the only way policies can get a hearing. I only hope Mr Kinnock will not escalate a campaign against the democratic right of members of his party to challenge the leadership. We must remember who we *should* be fighting and not be afraid to argue on socialist policies.

One-sided

Andrew Foot, Bodmin, Cornwall
I have just returned from a holiday-cum-pilgrimage in Israel to read Mona Rishmawi's article (*NS* 8 April). It seems to me to be the highly emotive type of account that will not help the situation at all.

However much truth there is in what she writes, she ignores the other side of the story. In 1945 the Jews had nowhere else to go. Even now they are faced by prejudice if not worse in many parts of the world. The United Nations suggested partition when the British Mandate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BY
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MAYBE IF I PUT OUT MY CIGARETTE...
MR. SLACKMEYER, AS YOU KNOW, THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAROLE HEARING IS TO ESTABLISH YOUR FITNESS FOR RE-ENTERING SOCIETY.
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LET'S SEE... UM... WELL, I'D... UH... DON'T TELL ME...
4-17
YOU GO TO THE POLICE. SEE YOU NEXT YEAR.
WAIT A MINUTE! I KNEW THAT! I KNEW THAT!

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ended but the Arab nations would not accept that and attacked the newly born Israeli state. They opted for violence, and when they were repulsed they refused to recognise Israel. They still proclaim their intention of throwing the Jewish settlers into the sea. Strategic necessity in the face of that threat enforces Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The wasp-waist of Israel was only 25 miles wide pre 1967; a tenable fact with a friendly neighbour but not with an avowed enemy who will not make peace.

Many of the surrounding nations are oil-rich and have immense space. They could easily have absorbed the Arabs who do not want to live in Israel. Mona Rishmawi says "Palestinians do not accept Israeli rule in whatever form." That was not our experience. Some at least of those to whom we spoke were anxious for peace — almost at any price. Should not those who won't accept Israeli rule be helped by the oil-rich Arab neighbours to re-settle — as the immigrant Jews had to re-settle when it became clear that life was untenable in the places where their families had lived for centuries?

Nothing can excuse the behaviour of Israeli soldiers who respond to stone-throwing in the ways that Mona Rishmawi describes. The situation, however, is not entirely the fault of the Jews — and it will not improve in the face of continued violence. Israel cannot possibly give way. There is nowhere else for the Jewish people to go.

Pretentious twaddle

Paul Barnett, Exeter, Devon

What is it that Judith Williamson has against the animation of the Walt Disney studios? I remember her review, some 18 months ago, of the Disney feature *Basil — The Great Mouse Detective,* as a high-point of advanced, postmodernistic pretentious twaddle. Her description of the movie showed either she had mixed it up with another or simply had a gut hatred for anything produced by Disney.

Now she introduces (*NS* 22 April) a review of old Warner Bros cartoons with a gratuitous and factually inaccurate paragraph attacking the Disney output. In terms of facts: *Steamboat Willie* was released in 1928, not 1929, and was not the first sound cartoon. To say that "in the 1920s Disney had pioneered the *Silly Symphonies* series" shows some ignorance, since the first of them, *The Skeleton Dance,* was released only in May 1929. To describe *Snow White* as "Grim Natwick's" is simply wrong: Natwick's contribution to the movie was to share the animation of the character Snow White with Hamilton Luske (and, probably, others). A few lines below we are told that "the *Symphonies'* composer, Carl Stalling, moved to Warners in 1936"; the importance of Stalling to the *Symphonies'* genesis cannot be overestimated, yet he left Disney in 1930 (returning for a brief period in 1932 as a freelance) and was the composer of only a few of the *Symphonies.*

Turning to Ms Williamson's opinions, based as they are on incorrect facts, we need look only at two statements: ". . . Disney — both the studio and its line drawing — grew more rigid after the high point of Grim Natwick's [*sic*] *Snow White* . . ." and "the Disney cartoon . . . in its decline aims increasingly at a child-audience that is deemed to require its

viewing matter to be at once sickly and antiseptic".

The first of these statements seems to ignore such achievements as *Pinocchio, Fantasia* (which is flawed, but has extended sequences of near-Surrealism), *Bambi* (think of the fight between Bambi and Ronno), *The Three Caballeros, Alice in Wonderland* (much loved by the Hippy culture precisely because of its Surrealism), *Sleeping Beauty,* sequences of *The Fox and the Hound* and *The Black Cauldron,* as well as countless shorts, including many of the *Silly Symphonies* and, perhaps most notably, the Donald Duck cartoon *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), one of the best animated shorts ever.

So far as Ms Williamson's jibe about Disney aiming "increasingly at a child-audience" is concerned, perhaps she could explain to us why the recent Disney feature *The Black Cauldron* (1985) was widely condemned all over the United States precisely on the basis that it was *not* aimed at children? Or perhaps she could explain why, at screenings of *Basil,* it was very noticeable that adults and children were all laughing *at the same jokes?*

Yes, Disney have released a great deal of exploitative pap in their time, but the same could be said of any studio — Warner Bros included. At the same time, both studios have created many brilliant movies, which are still much enjoyed today by adults and children alike. For Ms Williamson to dismiss the Disney achievement in such an ignorant fashion would suggest that it is a long time since she has actually *watched* some of the Disney movies — except, perhaps, through the fog of her own preconceived ideas.

Judith Williamson writes: Wise guy, huh?

Survivalism

Yvonne Roberts, London SW4

I have been out of the country for several weeks so only recently read Lyn Barlow's letter (*NS* 18 March) concerning my piece on John Francis Duffy, "the man with the laser eyes" and his link with the martial arts.

Lyn Barlow wrote that I ". . . not only failed to prove a link between violent crime and the martial arts", but "also displayed total ignorance in respect of what the martial arts are fundamentally about."

Sadly, Lyn Barlow displays an almost total ignorance of what I had actually written. I was *not* simply writing about the martial arts but also about the cult of survivalism which incorporates aspects of the martial arts.

Lyn Barlow writes that I "quoted details from a number of violent murders, one of which was committed by a man who had been a martial arts student." If she means Duffy, he committed at least two murders and all the other men listed had also been enthusiastic "survivalists".

Lyn Barlow writes of the spiritual aspects of the martial arts and its emphasis, when taught correctly, on self-discipline and respect for life. The theme of my piece was that the *corrupted* application of the martial arts and survivalism on "the immature and the inadequate" could have disastrous consequences. I also pointed out that thousands *do* practise karate, kick boxing, judo and so on "as a sport rather than an oriental version of the Ku Klux Klan".

Lyn Barlow writes: "On the periphery of martial arts, as in everything, there are cowboys/entrepreneurs cashing in, making money out of something that is fundamentally good . . ." The cowboys are certainly *not* on the periphery. The inadequacy of the system of licensing instructors, the total chaos which is the hallmark of the several and competing organising bodies of the sport (as Lyn Barlow must know), allows the "cowboys" a very easy ride. A true "sensei" or teacher is hard to find.

The fact is that there are men who find the imagery, power and theatrics of the bastardised version of the martial arts and survivalism, quite literally, a turn on. Acknowledgement of that must surely be the first step towards ensuring that there *is* adequate regulation — that the glorification of the "westernised" form of the martial arts *is* curtailed — and that more women do not die.

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The Engineers' and Managers' Association, which represents the professional and allied staffs in aerospace, electricity supply, engineering, oil, shipbuilding and other industries, invites applications for the post of **Organiser.**

The successful applicant will undertake recruitment for the EMA, including the promotion of the EMA, and will undertake organisational duties as may be appropriate. He or she will need to be an effective communicator with different audiences and through the media; to be energetic, have a lively mind, and willing to travel widely in the UK, and to be able to drive. He or she will need to be sympathetic to the aims and objectives of the EMA and preferably to have some experience of industry.

The appointment is for a two year term. The successful applicant will work from home. The salary will be **£15,000 subject to review after a year.** A car will be provided. A suitable superannuation arrangement can be discussed. The possibility exists of the appointment being converted into a permanent one at the end of the two years.

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Applications should be submitted to arrive not later than
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also

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AGENDA

SAT 30 APRIL

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SAT 7 MAY

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY. How can we change it? Speakers include Sheila Rowbotham, Hilary Wainwright, Swasti Mitter, Mary Kaldor, Ann Phillips. At PNL. Details from ACE, PNL, 383 Holloway Road, N7 0RN, Tel. 01-607 2789 Ext 2377.

EVENTS

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The Palestinian uprising in the Israeli occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank has renewed international concern about the future of Palestine.

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Weekend competition

No 3023 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

We've had the short, short, short crime story. Could we now have an sf story in max. 16 lines of verse? By Wednesday 11 May.

No 3020 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Features from a future *New Statesman* should it merge, not with *New Society,* but some other periodical.

Report **By Rosie Hughes**

I'm sorry that She was so cruel to you last week: She doesn't really mean it you know. Oh dear, that's not true, She *does* really mean it — what I'm trying to say is you must understand that it isn't easy being Her. For a start, beyond the Competition Complex, this office is staffed uniquely by militant non-smokers — and their latest move has been to empty Her humidor down the lavatory and insist that, instead of coronas, She smoke only Silk Cut mild. And even then She is not allowed so much as to poke Her head from her office without first showering, scrubbing Her nails, gargling (twice) and brushing Her teeth. Though myself I'm a Polo mint and humbug person, it does bring a tear to my eye. But now, my precious ones, to this week's entries: which I have to say were really jolly good. A Special Mention to Katie Mallett for her "Duncan Campbell: Homes of the Famous" feature from *New Statesman/Ideal Home,* to D. A. Prince for his (her?) *New Statesman/Amateur Gardening* "Jobs for April" and to dear Rob Hull for his "Clare Short Picture Caption" from *New Statesman/Playboy.* To the winners, below, a cuddle and twelve pounds each.

New Statesman/Mirror Group

Lively Letters

Do you old codgers reckon a commitment to clause four socialism is a *sine qua non* of continuing Labour Party membership? If so, where does that leave B. Gould *et al?*

You've certainly got us stumped there, squire. But it's a free country, ain't it?

Can you settle a bet? My pal reckons Neil Kinnock favours multilateralism. I say he's still a unilateralist. Who should pay up?

A ticklish question, sir. The fact is, we old codgers are a mite divided on this one. We suggest you and your pal buy your own drinks.

My husband would like to know who you think would make a really *inspiring* leader of the Labour Party.

Easy, ma'am! Robert Maxwell!

PETER NORMAN

New Statesman/Woman's Weekly

Weekend Competition

No 5763 Set by Rosy Dawn

Compers are invited to compose a poem about a cloudy day when everything seemed to be going wrong but then they suddenly had a visit from a little girl who had brought her new kitten for them to see and they thought that if everybody was like that little girl and her kitten the world would be a nicer place to live in and then the sun came out. Max. 12 lines by 13 Feb.

NOEL PETTY

New Statesman/Police Gazette

Films

Shot in black and white, *Bath Time* makes telling use of hand-held camera techniques. The anonymous director dwells lovingly on the heroine's intimate anatomy as she makes imaginative use of a bar of simple soap. Occasional long shots combine with close-ups in a fascinating montage; the sound track, almost totally devoid of dialogue, rings a resonant symphony on varieties of human respiration, counterpointed with the swish and gurgle of sudsy water. Copies of the film were seized last week in a routine raid on premises in Praed Street and are at present under lock and key at Praed Street Police Station. This is a director of whom it may confidently be predicted that he will be sought after.

C. J. D. DOYLE

New Statesman/Private Eye

Francis Wheen meets Grovel

I am sorry to hear that my old friend Paul Johnson, former GLS, has dismissed the *Private Statesman* as "downmarket" *Spectatler (shurely shome mishtake. Ed.)* This formerly Scarlet pimpernel has once more confounded detractors by writing rubbish about gorgeous, pouting Edwina Currie, who confided to me at the BBC that she had "better legs" than Mrs. Thatcher.

●

Who was the delectable antisexualist spotted on "the television" the other night? Step forward, Jill Knight, Grand Dame Sans Merci of Edgbaston. This ageing Westminsterette — dubbed "Senior Ena" by colleagues — has pushed for abortion on demand. This is so that she can reel off statistics about "supply-side economics" — and then say No.

●

Sir Robert Geldof *(that's enough Knights. Ed.)*

WILL BELLENGER

New Statesman/Rugby World

Matinée of the Week

In the end the match was drawn but it should have been hung first and quartered afterwards. Which is not to say it was meaningless. In fact it is hard to imagine a more dramatic symbolisation of the vicious nullity of Thatcherite values: relentless competition, red in tooth and stud, in single-minded pursuit of possession for its own sake. The toiling mass of the scrum laboured blindly all afternoon but gained nothing from what they produced. The entrepreneurs at their back saw to that. What was not squandered was lost, what was not lost was thrown away. It was not just that no advance was made. The very idea of progress seemed to be dying in front of our eyes.

W. J. WEBSTER

New Statesman/Playhour
(retrieved from shredder)

Here's a lady with a pointy nose and a floppy bow round her neck. Listen! She says Purr, Purr. Is she a pussy cat?

No! She is the big bad Thatcher-cat, with fierce white teeth, just like the wolf that gobbled up Red Riding Hood's granny, only Red Riding Hood was really a boy called Mikhail and the symbolic wolf got juxtaposed with . . . oh, fuck this. Why couldn't I have got that job on the *Economist?*

ALISON PRINCE

THE WORLD'S MOST PAINLESS OPERA HOUSE

Must surely be the Regal Opera House, Heckmondwike. Although this fine Regency edifice contains an auditorium of only modest proportions, the interval bars, of which there are no less than seven, are enormous and lavishly appointed. This is because the nature of the performances dictates that patrons spend rather more time in the bar than is customary with grand opera. Instead of being expected to sit through a dreary five-hour work, with only a couple of short breaks for refreshment, the Regal Opera House stages intervals of five hours, which are interrupted by short, specially-composed operas, none of which is more than five minutes long. Among the most popular titles are such masterpieces of brevity as "Die Meisterswiggers von Nürnberg," "Carmen Down the Pub Tonight?," "The Beverage of Figaro," "Boris Gudenovtobuythenextround," and "Gotterdamnlongwaituntilthenextinterval." But the all-time favourite, in a performance sponsored by Bewick's Bank, is Kevin Mozart's "Don Giovannimorecidersquire?" inspired by the one occasion when the opera house ran out of Merrydown Vintage Cider and almost closed down as a result. Such is the discrimination of the patrons that Merrydown is deemed the only cider worthy of this temple of culture, because Merrydown uses only fine English apples like Bramleys and Cox's in its fermentation, instead of the bitter little cider apples used in those brands popular with less cultivated sectors of the musical public. Is it therefore any wonder that in operatic circles, it is whispered that Merrydown was the favourite tipple of the great Carouser himself?

Merrydown.
Aida for the few.

Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum'; and 'The Week-end Review'. Registered as a newspaper. Typesetting by Fastpoint, 102/108 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1.
Printed by BPCC Colchester Web Offset Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LJ (Tel. 577881), a member company of BPCC Printing Corporation plc.
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ.

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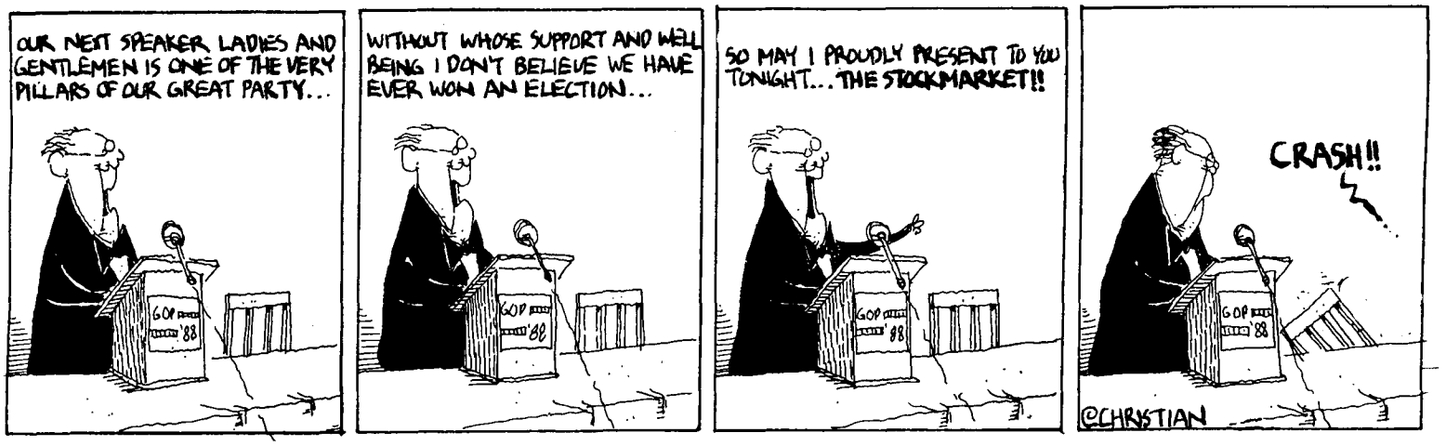
OUR NEXT SPEAKER, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IS ONE OF THE VERY PILLARS OF OUR GREAT PARTY...
WITHOUT WHOSE SUPPORT AND WELL BEING I DON'T BELIEVE WE HAVE EVER WON AN ELECTION...
SO MAY I PROUDLY PRESENT TO YOU TONIGHT... THE STOCKMARKET!!
CRASH!!
GOP '88
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Chess

LOTS MORE to report on the **SWIFT World Cup** in Brussels. The bad news is that our old friend Jon Speelman tumbled out of the lead when he blundered against Sax. Other news is all to the good, or at least to the pleasure of chess fans. Best of all is the way the *grand prix* is already proving to be excitingly competitive.

Karpov assumes the lead, but is closely hunted by his compatriots Beliavsky and Salov. In round 5 Beliavsky had beaten Karpov, only to lose himself to Valery Salov two rounds later. Two rounds after that he trained his sights on Tal's King (see diagram).

From the *diagram* **Beliavsky-Tal continued: 25...e6** The position is crammed with tactical points, the most important being 25...Ng3 26. Qxe7+! Rxe7 27. Rxe7+ Kc6 28. Nb4+ Kb5 29. b3! Qg8 30. Bb2! Rc5 31. c4+ and White wins. **26. Ne3 Nxe3 27. Rxe3 Rxf4** Black has his bombs too. But to defuse them White only needs to think in terms of exchanges that will preserve two advantages — i) Bishop versus Nd8, and ii) the Black K exposed in the centre. **28. Qxg6 Rf1 29. Ree1 Rxe1 30. Qg7+ Ke8 31. Qh8+** Just checking to ensure he can safely let the c2 pawn fall. **Kd7 32. Qg7+ Ke8 33. Rxe1 Qxc2+ 34. Ka1 Qd2 35. Bc3 Qf2 36. Rd1 Qf7 37. Qh8+ Kd7 38. Qxh4 Nc6 39. g4 e5** Both sides have connected passed pawns. The difference is that Black can only advance his at the cost of exposing his K. **40. g5 Rg8 41. Qg3 Qh5 42. Qd3 Rg6 43. h4 Re6 44. Rh1 e4 45. Qa6 d5 46. Rc1 Kd6 47. Be1!** A decisive switch of diagonal. Now that the Black pawns are on white squares the King is prey to the Bishop.. **Qe8 48. h5 Ke5 49. Qf1 e3 50. Bg3+ Ke4 51. Qf4+ 1-0.** For it is mate after 51...Kd3 52. Rd1+ Kc2 53. Qa4 or 52...Ke2 53. Qg4.

Regicide like this Mikhail Tal has often inflicted, rarely suffered. But in the *grand prix* no one has immunity. Two rounds on again and Nunn, till then becalmed on 8 draws and a win over Sax, reduced him to a miniature:

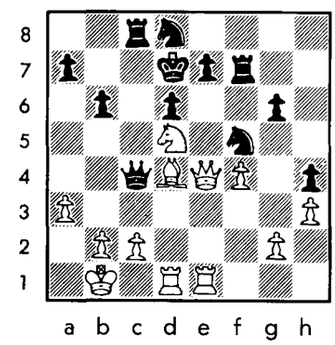
Nunn-Tal, Rd. 11. Caro-Kann Defence.
1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nd7 5. Ng5 Ndf6 6. N1f3 e6 A curious possibility: 6...h6? 7. Nxf7! Kxf7 8. Ne5+ Ke8 9. Bd3. **7. Ne5** These GMs don't seem to have much respect for the principle that frowns on moving the same piece twice. **Nh6 8. Bd3 Bd6 9. c3 Qc7 10. Qe2 c5?!** I don't want to commit myself on what Black should do, but I'm pretty sure it's not this. **11. Bb5+ Ke7 12. 0-0 cxd4 13. cxd4 Nf5 14. Be3 Nxe3** He must have missed the force of White's 17th. **15. fxe3 Bxe5 16. dxe5 Qxe5 17. Qd3!** An absolute killer. Black can do nothing against the check from a3. **Qxg5 18. Qa3+ Kd8 19. Rad1+ Bd7 20. Bxd7 1-0.** White wins easily after 20...Nxd7 21. Rxf7.

Tal's many admirers should not be too sad to see the old hero handled so roughly. In the very next round he played a brilliant speculative sacrifice, quite in the style of his youth, and completely outgunned Sokolov. Nunn followed with a draw against Portisch and then won a fine game against Beliavsky. At the end of the tournament it will probably turn out that this effort was a big favour to Karpov. We shall see.

Wonderful as the SWIFT tournament has been, there are other contenders yet to appear in the *grand prix*, such as Kasparov and Short, whose participation should add to the fun. There is also Boris Spassky. He has not been a force to reckon with for some time. Having no ambition left, he had simply given up trying for anything more than respectable results. But the *grand prix* may re-animate him. Last month the Plaza International tournament in New Zealand revealed a re-born Boris. He ventured a King's Gambit against Zsusza Polgar on the way to a tie for the first place with Gufeld and Chandler. Gufeld had led from the start, but the ex-world-champion overhauled his Soviet colleague with masterful play:

Spassky-Gufeld, Wellington Plaza International 1988. Closed Sicilian.
1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. d3 d6 6. f4 e6 7. Nf3 Nge7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Be3 Nd4 10. Bf2 Nxf3+ 11. Bxf3 Nc6 12. Bg2 Nd4?! Because of the idea revealed in this game, better is 12...Rb8 as Karpov played against Spassky at Linares 1983. **13. e5! dxe5 14. fxe5 Bxe5 15. Ne4 f5 16. Nxc5 Qd6 17. b4 Rb8 18. c3 Nb5 19. d4 Bf6 20. Qb3 b6 21. Nd3 Bb7 22. Bxb7 Rxb7 23. a4 Nc7 24. Rfe1 Nd5?** With White already having the lion's share of the centre he should not let the c-pawn advance with *tempo*. **25. c4 Ne7 26. Nf4 Nc6 27. Rxe6 Qxb4 28. Qd3 Ne7 29. Be1 Qb2 30. Bc3 Qb3** The positional building is completed and Spassky is now ready to wreck Black's game with a temporary sacrifice. **31. Rxf6! Rxf6 32. d5 Kf7 33. Ne6 Rxe6 34. dxe6+ Kxe6 35 Re1+ Kf7 36. Qd4 Qxa4 37. Qg7+ Ke8 38. Bf6 Kd8 39. Qf8+ Qe8 40. Rd1+ Rd7 41. Bxe7+ Kc7 42. Qxe8 1-0.**

Beliavsky-Tal: after White's 25th



George Botterill

New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ
Tel: 01-739 3211 (Editorial & Administration)
Telex: 28449/Cables: Newstat, London E2/Fax 01-739 9307
© 1988 Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd & contributors
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd
Distributed by NS Distribution

Editor: Stuart Weir; **Deputy Editor:** John Rentoul; **Acting Assistant Editor:** Isabel O'Keeffe; **Books & Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert; **Writers:** Sarah Benton, Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland), Jolyon Jenkins; **Deputy Books & Arts Editor:** Malcolm Imrie; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Art Editor:** Vicky Hutchings; **Sub-editor:** Christine Orton; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

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Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork will only be returned if an SAE is enclosed.

Subscription rates: UK & Eire £40; Europe (air mail only £46); rest of world: air speeded £51; air mail £61. USA; air speeded $70; air mail $85. Canada: air speeded Can $90; air mail Can $115.

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☐ A bad-tempered donkey had to be calmed down with Polo mints after unseating the Rev Roy Catchpole as he recreated Jesus's ride to Jerusalem for children at Calverton, Notts. — *The Star* (George Moor)

☐ "I hate to use the word striptease," says Paul Raymond. "Today it is each individual act doing her her own thing, with very expensive props." He is still a Roman Catholic of sorts, although apparently free, after his divorce, and long career in Soho, from any disagreeable sense of guilt. "Looking back," he says, "I really have been a very lucky person indeed, and probably what I have done — my success — may be a message from God, you know." — *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

☐ Flavoured condoms in the blue and gold colours of the BMA could be inserted into the centre pages of the *BMJ*, in a bid to promote safe sex. The idea is the brainchild of Cambridgeshire GP Dr Charles Saunders, who found enthusiastic support for a BMA condom club bearing his name at last weekend's Junior Members Forum. — *General Practitioner* (B.R. Jackson)

☐ He told Basildon Chamber of Trade: "A lot of people look down their nose at Basildon. They feel it is a tiny bit common, when it's not." He said Basildon was taking off in a big way with a driving test centre and a crematorium planned. — *Basildon Standard Recorder* (Dan Clarke)

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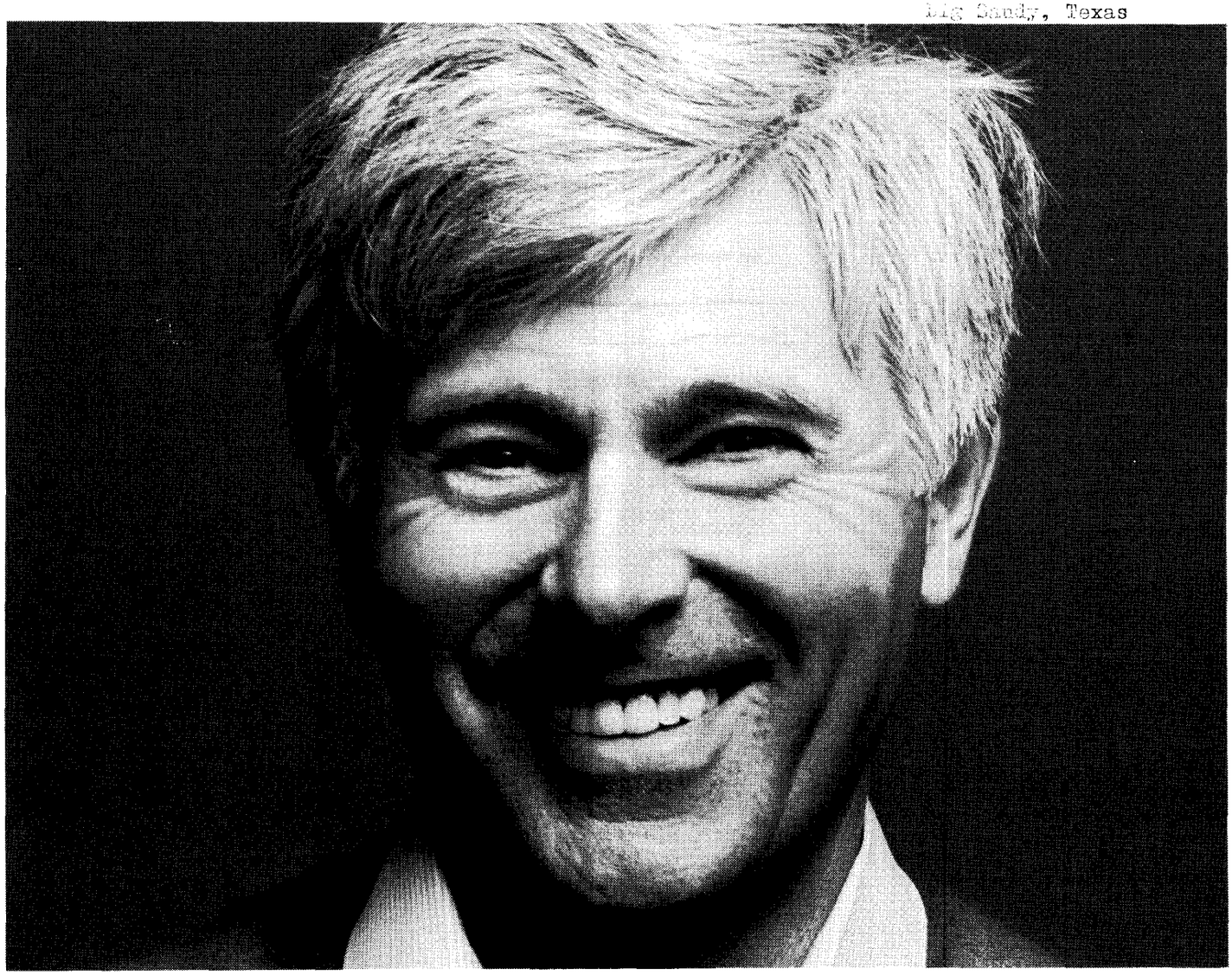

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